DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 372 CS 211 447

AUTHOR O'Sullivan, Colleen, Ed.
TITLE Australian Literature in the Primary Classroom.
INSTITUTION Primary English Teaching Association, Rozelle (Australia).
SPONS AGENCY Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra (Australia).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-642-53276-1
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 93p.; Project developed for the Bicentennial Australian Studies Schools Project.
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Australian Literature; *Childrens Literature; Class Activities; Elementary Education; *English Instruction; Foreign Countries; Literature Appreciation; *Poetry; Reading Materials
IDENTIFIERS Aboriginal People; *Australia; Historical Background

ABSTRACT

This book was designed to supply information on available resources in Australian children's literature and a tradition of teaching which incorporates the Australian experience in an inclusive manner. Essays and their authors consist of the following: (1) "Children's Books in Australia: Two Hundred Years of Social Life" (Maurice Saxby); (2) "One of the Family" (Anne Hazel); (3) "Access to Australia's Past" (Colleen O'Sullivan); (4) "Performing Australian Poetry" (Sean Monahan); (5) "Conducting an Author Study" (Victoria Roberts and Vivienne Nicoll); (6) "Aboriginal Stories: Reliving the Experience" (Fran Murray); (7) "Tuning In to the Spirit of Place" (Lyn Linning); (8) "Death of the Spaghetti Dance" (Mary Mathias and Janet Oxwell); (9) "Rural Australia--Urban Australia" (Joan Zahnleiter); (10) "Outside-Inside Playground Rhymes" (Moira Robinson); (11) "Great Races and Challenges (Susan Hill and others); and (12) "Australia--Where Are We Going?" (Marie Luxford and Maureen Ferry). (MS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

FD297372

Australian Literature in the Primary Classroom

CS211 447

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. Carr
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

2

Bicentennial Australian Studies Schools Project

Australian Literature in the Primary Classroom

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Carr

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Developed by the Primary English Teaching Association with Colleen O'Sullivan as coordinator, for the Bicentennial Australian Studies Schools Project — a joint project of the Curriculum Development Centre and the Australian Bicentennial Authority.

1988

Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra

© Commonwealth of Australia 1988
AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM.
ISBN 0 642 53276 1.

1. Australian literature — Study and teaching (Elementary) — Australia. I. O'Sullivan, Colleen. II. Commonwealth Schools Commission (Australia). Curriculum Development Centre. III. Bicentennial Australian Studies Schools Project. IV. Primary English Teaching Association (Australia).

372.6'4

Published by the Curriculum Development Centre,
P.O. Box 34, Woden, A.C.T., 2606.

Foreword

The Bicentennial Australian Studies Schools Project (BASSP) is a component of the national education program of the Australian Bicentennial Authority, developed and implemented by the Curriculum Development Centre.

A national review of Australian studies in schools was conducted by the project in 1985. This review found that teachers generally considered that the Australian experience is a relevant and necessary part of the learning programs that they offer their students. However, they often lacked both information on available resources and a tradition of teaching approaches which incorporate this Australian experience in an inclusive manner.

This publication, designed to meet both of these needs in relation to Australian literature, has been developed for CDC by the Primary English Teaching Association. This productive partnership has ensured that the resources and teaching activities presented are relevant to the needs of the primary classroom teacher.

BASSP materials are designed to stimulate further development of a curriculum that promotes learning about Australia and the Australian experience. They are part of the review and renewal of the Australian curriculum being undertaken by teachers and education systems throughout Australia.

Brent Corish
Director
Curriculum Development Centre

Contents

Foreword iii

Introduction 1

Children's Books in Australia:
Two Hundred Years of Social Life 5
Maurice Saxby

One of the Family 11
Anne Hazel

Access to Australia's Past 17
Colleen O'Sullivan

Performing Australian Poetry 27
Sean Monahan

Conducting an Author Study 33
Victoria Roberts
Vivienne Nicoll

Aboriginal Stories . . .
. . . Reliving the Experience 44
Fran Murray

Tuning in to the Spirit of Place 52
Lyn Linning

Death of the Spaghetti Dance 59
Mary Mathias
Janet Oxwell

Rural Australia — Urban Australia 64
Joan Zahnleiter

Outside — Inside Playground Rhymes 70
Moira Robinson

Great Races and Challenges 75
Susan Hill, Meredith Kennedy
Judy O'Brien, Rosemary Hann

Australia — Where are We Going? 81
Marie Luxford
Maureen Ferry

Introduction

Australia's Bicentennial Year has provided the impetus for primary teachers to share with their classes the traditional lifestyles of Australia's Aboriginal inhabitants and the coming of the First Fleet and European settlement. But it is to be hoped that an exploration of Australian society does not end with the eighteenth century.

This could be a year in which teachers choose to explore with children in some depth what it means to be Australian.

The authors of this book have chosen as their starting point for such an exploration the rich diversity of stories and poetry written for children by Australian authors. The aims of the publication are to:

- raise primary teachers' awareness of the importance of Australian children's literature
- introduce primary teachers to the diversity of Australian children's literature available
- suggest a variety of practical approaches whereby primary teachers may:
  - integrate the study of Australian children's literature with their normal classroom curriculum
  - lead children to a deeper appreciation of a number of Australian children's titles and
  - lead children to reflect upon the social concerns of contemporary Australian society.

It is hoped that the book will be welcomed by the many teachers throughout Australia who already give literature a prominent role in their teaching programs. Teachers not familiar with the range of Australian children's literature available should find here a selection of titles for their own reading enjoyment, for sharing with children and for incorporating in their literature programs.

In his summation of the history of Australian literature for children, Maurice Saxby states that such literature '. . . records as no history book could the changing relationship of Australians to their land, their institutions and to each other.' Through stories, films and poetry, teachers and children may seek their own answers to questions such as:

- What concerns about Australia might authors want us to consider?
- What do we learn about Australian society from an historical novel or film?
- Why are Australians often in conflict with their natural environment?

- How can we learn to live in harmony with the Australian environment?
- What changes in society occur when different cultures meet?
- Rural Australia – urban Australia. What's the difference?
- What changes have science and technology brought about in Australia and what kind of Australia do we want in the future?
- How are families changing in Australia?
- What do we learn from Aboriginal stories and what is different about stories told rather than stories written?

There is also a lighter side to Australian literature for children . . . their own playground rhymes and chants, as well as a variety of humorous poetry and stories.

Contributors to this book have not assumed any one literature approach. Instead they have drawn upon a wide range of teaching strategies recognised as successful in engaging children with literature. These include:

Teacher's serialisation of a novel with ongoing discussion and related activities.

For example

- a study of the writing of Robin Klein begins with a whole class sharing of one of her books (see *Conducting an Author Study*)
- when the recommended reading for a literature topic includes a book just beyond most of the children's independent reading level the teacher reads it aloud (see *Great Races and Challenges, Access to Australia's Past, Tuning in to the Spirit of Place*).

Wide reading by children of titles they select from the range provided by the teacher to augment the class library. In many cases this is followed by small group sharing sessions or contract activities.

For example

- the teacher provides stories and poetry pertinent to a theme and when each child has read a few titles the teacher initiates small group discussion designed to compare and contrast the views of different authors (see *Tuning in to the Spirit of Place, Rural Australia-Urban Australia, One of the Family)*
- as part of a contract (see *Conducting an Author Study, Performing Australian Poetry*)
- augmenting the sustained silent reading collection (class library) with accompanying teacher promotion of selected titles (see *Death of the Spaghetti Dance*).

Small group silent reading of teacher-selected novels where multiple copies are available. Children participate in teacher-developed activities before, during and after the reading.

For example

- as part of an author study, each small group reads a different title (see *Conducting an Author Study*)
- as part of a theme study, each small group reads a different story to contribute a perspective to the topic (see *Death of the Spaghetti Dance*)
- to raise children's awareness of the scope of a topic prior to wider reading (see *One of the Family*).

A feature of most chapters in this book is the quality of the teacher-initiated *discussion* of the books to be read. Primary children can engage in discussion well beyond the literal sorting out of a book's story-line, provided the environment is conducive and the teacher plans open-ended, but carefully worded questions which challenge children's thinking. Sometimes these questions focus upon the story and the motivation of characters, sometimes upon the author's telling of the story. These questions send children back to the book for their response. Other questions encourage children to move beyond the text and to relate the vicarious experiences of the story to their own lives.

A further common characteristic of most chapters is the provision of appropriate activities specifically developed to deepen children's appreciation of a particular book. Through writing, art, drama and rehearsed reading children may relive the experience of a story or poem, or share their interpretation of it with their peers. In designing activities to encourage response, teachers need to maintain a delicate balance between:

- 'killing' a book with too many activities and . . .
  . . . missing teachable moments to explore a book
- giving children so few guidelines that they are unsure of how to proceed and . . .
  . . . prescribing an activity in such detail that initiative and individuality are stifled
- developing activities which are only superficially related to the book selected and . . .
  . . . overwhelming primary children with too formal a study of literary elements.

This book encompasses a variety of approaches and a range of activities from which teachers may select those appropriate to the needs and interests of their students. *Choice* is a fundamental aspect of any literature program. In implementing the suggestions in this publication, teachers should give children some freedom as to the titles they read, as well as negotiating with them the activities to be pursued during and after the reading of a book. Above all, activities pursued in relation to any book should achieve one essential goal — that is, to heighten the reader's appreciation and enjoyment of literature.

Children's Books in Australia: Two Hundred Years of Social Life

Maurice Saxby

Australian literature for children reflects our nation's social history. It records as no history book could, the changing relationship of Australians to their land, their institutions and to each other. It traces a growing national identity. Australian books confirm life as Australian children experience it and help them discover what it is to be Australian, yet a citizen of the world.

The first book in the infant colony of New South Wales to be written expressly for children was *A Mother's Offering to Her Children* published in Sydney in 1841 and written by Charlotte Barton, a governess. It was in catechistic dialogue form, very much in the English and European educational tradition inspired by the work of Rousseau. Mrs Saville and her children have frequent discussions about the 'remarkable trees' of the countryside but, on the insistence of the children, Mrs Saville narrates episodes of high adventure telling of shipwreck and cannibalism by 'dreadful sanguinary creatures'. This and other books of the same genre such as Louise Anne Meredith's *Tasmanian Friends and Foes; Feathered, Furred and Finned; A Family Chronicle of Country Life, Natural History, and Veritable Adventure* (1880) saw the land through alien English eyes and its Aboriginals as benighted heathens. The pervading attitudes were fervently moralistic.

Robust adventure

There quickly developed in Australia a strain of robust boys' adventure literature like that of the British *Boy's Own Paper;* frontier stories in the tradition of G.A. Henty, R.M. Ballantyne and W.H.G. Kingston — all true sons of the Empire.

The harsh Australian climate, the demands of the land itself, an inability to understand the Aboriginal tribes, and the threat from outlaws and escaped convicts, all provided a challenge to the survival and manhood of young heroes often straight from Britain. Thus many of the early children's books were in essence exotic travellers' tales enjoyed also by adults. *A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia* (1854) by William Howitt and others, such as *From Squire to Squatter* (1888) by William G. Stables, were inducements to stalwart Britishers to emigrate to the colonies, to rough it, toughen up and make their fortune.

The gold rush of the 1850s added another element of conflict and romance in books like *Tom's Nugget* (1880) by Professor Hodgetts, and gave opportunity for

detailed social comment. 'A fouler sink of iniquity than Melbourne in 1852 cannot be imagined' writes Hodgetts. The lure of the goldfields is still an inspiration in Australian children's writing with carefully researched novels like Valerie Thompson's *Rough Road South* (1975) and *Gold on the Wind* (1977) alongside extravagant spoofs like Susanne Ferriers's comic-strip picture book *Lola: A Doubtful Documentary of Her Doings at the Diggings* (1985).

The bushranging tradition has also been satirised in hilarious novels such as Randolph Stow's *Midnite: the Story of a Wild Colonial Boy* (1967), and parodied in picture books like *Bossyboots* (1985) by David Cox.

Australian adventure literature of survival is still being published but contemporary writers from Ivan Southall onward have added a psychological dimension. Physical ordeal frequently uncovers feelings of personal guilt or inadequacy. In *Firestorm!* (1985) by Roger Vaughan Carr a disastrous bushfire tests individual adults as well as children and the community generally.

Fantasy in an Australian setting

As well as adventure there was fantasy in our children's books. This fantasy, inspired by an English fairytale tradition and particularly by Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) looked behind the demanding physical landscape and vigorous lifestyle to the imaginative life of the spirit, which is particularly active in children. However it did not emerge easily from the Australian bush. Early attempts to import English elves and fairies and provide 'the merry children of the fair South Land' with 'dreams of their own Fairy Lore' in books such as Atha Westbury's *Australian Fairy Tales* (1897) produced the trappings of fairyland but not the stuff of fantasy. The land rejected them.

On the other hand the theme of caring for our bushland heritage was becoming embedded in a folktale tradition of storytelling and in fantasy. *Dot and the Kangaroo* (1899) by Ethel Pedley is a fantasy in that Dot eats berries of understanding then converses with the bush creatures and rides in the pouch of the kangaroo; but it is also a plea for kindness to animals and the preservation of the bush — both themes which endure to the present day. Ruth Park's latest novel, for example, *My Sister Sif* (1986) is a fantasy about sea people and fairy folk but also an impassioned anti-pollution plea for conservation.

It was the bush itself — its gum trees and banksias, its hardy wild flowers and unique bird and animal life — which provided the inspiration for a true Australian genre of fantasy. Ida Rentoul Outhwaite's beautifully executed and lavishly produced *Elves and Fairies* (1916) has become a collector's item. However while Outhwaite depicted English sprites inhabiting Australian glens and glades, it was May Gibbs who created true bush creatures like the bold bad Banksia man and gumnut cherubs like *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* (1918) and who personified the Australian bush.

In that year too, Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding* appeared, combining magic, satire, realism and sheer tomfoolery with childhood's perennial preoccupation with food. The episodic adventures of Bunyip Bluegum and his battle with the Pudding Thieves has become one of the world's most acclaimed children's books.

In 1933 Dorothy Wall created *Blinky Bill,* a mischievous but lovable koala

larrikin of lasting appeal, and in 1935 Pixie O'Harris produced an Australian sea fantasy *Pearl Pinkie and Sea Greenie.*

However, it was Frank Dalby Davison's *Children of the Dark People* (1936) which was to point the direction of future significant Australian fantasy. Here the Aboriginal spirit world reaches out to engulf two children Jackadgery and Nimmitybel who are pursued by the forces of fear represented by the Witch Doctor. They are aided by the Spirits of the Bush, including the venerable Mr Bunyip, and the beneficence of nature as personified by Grandfather Gumtree.

Then in Nan Chauncy's *Tangara* (1960) a white girl, Lexie, draws strength from an Aboriginal 'ghost' girl, Merrina, with whom she has a spiritual affinity. To Lexie comes a traumatic vision of the atrocities of the past, and when Merrina averts a tragedy another debt is added to those of the past.

In the same year as *Tangara,* came Patricia Wrightson's *Rocks of Honey* through which blows a distant breeze from the Dreamtime. Through the uncle of his Aboriginal friend, Eustace, Barney Willis the white boy, begins dimly to apprehend something of the profundity of the ancient continent he calls 'home', and Eustace himself comes to terms with his own racial and cultural heritage.

Although fantasy as a genre has developed strongly in this country and there are now a number of writers following the English traditions of Lewis or Tolkein, Australians such as Joan Phipson, Bill Scott and Patricia Wrightson have discovered a spiritual affinity with this most ancient of continents. Wrightson's *The Nargun and the Stars* (1974), her *Wirrun* trilogy (1977 –1982) and *A Little Fear* (1983) are far more than literary fairy tales using Aboriginal spirit creatures. They are sagas of the indestructability of the land itself, stating implicitly that those who live in harmony with the land and follow its law are the strong; that true heroes belong to, and are at one with the land which gave them birth.

A settled social order and the family story

Before the statement of this realisation in fantasy there had to be a development in Australia of the 'story of family life'. The family story was born when Australians felt that they had partly conquered and tamed the bushland and were beginning to live in cities, enjoying holidays in the mountains and excursions across the harbour to coastal beaches. Others lived affluent lives on station properties which had their own social order and were built upon solid, upper-middle class values.

So the novel of domestic adventure began with Ethel Turner's famous *Seven Little Australians* (1894). Still widely read, staged and filmed, it is regarded as an Australian classic. This essentially happy family along with numerous other families created by Ethel Turner and her sister Lilian, provided the prototype of Australian family life which was to endure into the 1970s in novels by writers such as Joan Phipson and Eleanor Spence.

School, rather than home, provided the environment for Louise Mack's *Teens* (1897) and *Girls Together* (1898) in which personal relationships are tested and cemented in a context as torrid and intense as that in Robin Klein's *Hating Alison Ashley* (1984) but separated by almost one hundred years in social attitudes. The loves, hates, fears and enthusiasms are much the same: it is the expression of them that is so much freer in Klein's novels.

Between 1894 and 1942 Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce, whose

'Billabong' series has a cult following even today, published between them, over eighty titles, and helped provide Australian children with a sense of national identity; a sense of belonging to a country and a society based on seemingly enduring, rock-like values. World War I raised a few questions, perhaps, but reinforced rather than shook prevailing attitudes to the work ethic, the solidity of family life and the worth of the individual.

And in spite of the Great Depression of the 1930s, life in Australia between the two world wars was relatively settled. So our books for children were largely run-of-the-mill adventure stories featuring happy families and mainly set in the country.

But by 1950 Australians felt that they had conquered and subdued the land itself, although still threatened by drought, flood and bushfire. Moreover they were determined to provide a rosy future for their children — economically, educationally and culturally.

So with the development of school and children's libraries, the establishment of organisations such as the Children's Book Council and the impetus to local publishing provided by the isolation of World War II, children's books came to be taken seriously in this country. Local writers could now forsake English models and write of family life on the land and in the city as they knew and experienced it. Nan Chauncy's *Tiger in the Bush* (1957) in which a remote valley in Tasmania provides the sanctuary for a tightly-knit family unit, won the Australian Children's Book of the Year and helped establish the modern 'Australian' novel of family life. In the next decade Nan Chauncy was to be joined by writers such as Patricia Wrightson, Joan Phipson, Eleanor Spence, Margaret Paice, Mavis Thorpe Clark and Hesba Brinsmead in portraying almost ideal Australian families. Life might bring its troubles but these could be overcome with initiative and creative activity.

Social awareness and protest

It was these established writers, later to be joined by many new ones, who were to leave the well-travelled paths of children's books and give to their plots a new relevance to the children of a searching generation. Brinsmead in *Pastures of the Blue Crane* (1964) referred to the White Australia Policy and brought to the surface the question of an individual's racial heritage.

From the middle sixties through the seventies into the eighties writers began to break new ground by dealing with 'problems'. In Mavis Thorpe Clark's *The Min Min* (1967) there is a drunken, bullying father whose daughter walks out on him. Andy Hodel in Patricia Wrightson's *I Own the Racecourse* (1968) is retarded; John in Southall's *Let the Balloon Go* (1968) is spastic; Douglas in Eleanor Spence's *The October Child* (1976) is autistic. These problems are personal, but they also belong to the family and to society.

Since 1970, Australia, with so much of the world, has incurred the stresses and distresses of social and family life that technological advance always brings. Thus, the problem novel and the confessional stance through first-person narrative, letters or diaries has become increasingly prevalent as in Robin Klein's *Penny Pollard* books (1983-6) and those by writers such as Frank Willmott and Maureen Stewart. This is especially true of books for the 'young adult'.

Writers, too, have become socially aware and active. Themes of conservation

and race relations run through much of the writing of Colin Thiele. David Martin has written about migrants living in Australia and Nadia Wheatley, for example, in *Five Times Dizzy* (1982) and *Dancing in the Anzac Deli* (1984) provides a picture of a multicultural society. Aboriginal voices like Kath Walker's in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972) and *Father Sky, Mother Earth* (1981) and Gulpilil's in *Stories of the Dreamtime* (1979) and *The Birirrk* (1983) sound more clearly than those who wrote about Aboriginals like Thomas Roy *The Curse of the Turtle* (1977) or Pat Peatfield Price *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* (1981).

In uncertain times there are those writers like Thurley Fowler and Nadia Wheatley who in *Green Wind* (1985) and *The House That Was Eureka* (1985) both hark back to the poverty and hardship of the 1930s: Fowler to draw comfort and reassurance, and Wheatley for added strength in her belief that many of the ills are political. On the other hand Joan Phipson in *Dinko* (1985) and Victor Kelleher in *Taronga* (1986) write of the possibility of nuclear attack and 'last days', when society as we know it has broken down.

Australian children's literature today

So the subject matter of children's books has widened to include practically every aspect of life as Australians experience it. At the same time the style of writing for children has moved from formal nineteenth century English to Australian English with all its registers and colloquialisms.

The point of view adopted has become increasingly that of the child protagonist so that Simon French's *All We Know* (1986), for example, is a personal, non-judgmental record of a girl's thoughts and feelings during the last year at primary school, and personal and family relationships as she sees them.

Along with this widening of tone and content there has been a shift in publishing emphasis to cater for specific forms of children's literature. Age-groups have given place to recognisable categories of children's literature.

The picture book

Since the 1970s when technological developments made colour printing much more accessible and less costly, artists have adopted the picture book as an art form of self-expression. Desmond Digby's *Waltzing Matilda* (1971) was the first of a line of bush ballads and early Australian songs preserved in picture book form. Then came a series of Aboriginal stories by Dick Roughsey and later Percy Tresize beginning with *The Giant Devil Dingo* (1973).

This is how a vast range of picture books became available: from ABC's, counting books, wordless stories, concept books through picture stories to picture books of ideas for mature readers.

Picture stories range from multifaceted images like Jenny Wagner's *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat* (1977) illustrated by Ron Brooks, to the runaway bestseller *Possum Magic* (1983) by Mem Fox and illustrated by Julie Vivas. Robert Ingpen's subtly layered text and highly evocative illustrations for *The Idle Bear* (1986) and Junko Morimoto's deeply moving traditional Japanese story, *Kojuro and the Bears* (1986) are indications of the range, universality and maturity of appeal of contemporary Australian picture books.

For junior readers

Until the Children's Book Council instituted the Junior Book of the Year in 1982 there was a need felt by teachers and librarians for more books of quality for children who were consolidating their reading skills. Publishers are now trying to fill this gap with series like Hodder's Stoat Books and Penguin's Australian Original Young Puffins. Jean Chapman has produced a series of highly successful anthologies of verse, story, song and activity for this readership. Ruth Park, Christobel Mattingley and Emily Rodda (*Pigs Might Fly,* 1986) have written excellent books for young independent readers.

Poetry

Apart from C.J. Dennis whose *A Book For Kids* was published in 1921, few Australian poets wrote specifically for children. Pioneer anthologies like those of Bertram Stevens and George Mackaness were, as their titles suggested, mainly *Selections From the Australian Poets* and concentrated on Paterson, Lawson, Kendall and other bush poets.

In 1958 Lydia Pender published *Marbles in My Pocket,* a collection of gentle poems for young children. Her work and that of poets such as Irene Gough began to appear in anthologies like *Chosen For Children* (1967) but even in 1975 Alf Mappin's collection *Sing in Bright Colours* consisted largely of adult poems considered suitable for children.

Then two things happened. Firstly, Doug MacLeod and Max Fatchen began to publish their humorous, sometimes satirical, verse written from a slightly sardonic child's point of view. MacLeod's *In the Garden of Bad Things* (1981) and *The Fed Up Family Album* (1983) became instant classroom favourites along with Fatchen's *Songs For My Dog and Other People* (1980) and *Wry Rhymes For Troublesome Times* (1983). Anthologies of humorous verse quickly became popular.

About the same time June Factor began to publish her collections of children's playground rhymes – many of them rude – beginning with *Far Out, Brussel Sprout!* (1983). A new liveliness entered Australian children's poetry.

Currently collections such as June Covernton's *Putrid Poems* (1985) and *Petrifying Poems* (1986) are beautifully balanced by free ranging, elegant but cheerful anthologies of traditional and contemporary Australian poems for children which include poems by Aboriginal poets e.g. *Someone is Flying Balloons* (1983) and *Rattling in the Wind* (1987) selected by Jill Heylen and Celia Jellett. The state of Australian poetry for children has never been better. The same can be said of Australian literature for children generally.

Today the Australian stalls at the annual Children's Book Fair in Bologna and at the Frankfurt World Book Fair do a brisk trade in translations and rights for international editions. In 1988 a major exhibition of our children's books will be held at the International Youth Library in Munich where the Australian section regularly draws scholars from around the world. And when in Tokyo in August 1986, Patricia Wrightson was presented with the gold medal of the Hans Christian Andersen Award for writing, and Robert Ingpen that for illustrating (the only time in history that both medals have gone to the same country) the world acclaimed Australia's outstanding achievement in the realm of children's literature.

One of the Family

Anne Hazel

Family stories in Australian children's literature in the past were often vehicles for adventures or mysteries in which the exploration of relationships between family members was of little importance. Most of the families were in the traditional mould i.e. mother, father, three children, usually with the oldest and therefore most important member being a boy. Occasional visits to and by grandparents and cousins broadened the family unit. Often the setting for such stories was the outback, complete with bushfires, floods, cattle thieves and horseriding.

Perhaps the best-known author in this genre was Mary Grant Bruce whose Billabong stories, written over a thirty year period from 1910 were seen as the epitome of the Australian family adventure story. However, even during the 1950s and 1960s this tradition continued in the early writings of such authors as Joan Phipson *(Good Luck to the Rider,* 1953) and Mavis Thorpe Clark *(Pony from Tarella,* 1959).

The Australian family story of the 1980s, however, differs from the earlier stories in many ways. Some of the families have single parents, the settings are often urban, the main protagonist is as likely to be a girl as a boy and the exploration of relationships between children and their parents or siblings has largely replaced the exploration of the outback. In fact these stories of the eighties are far more likely to provide characters and situations with which children can identify, than did the stories of the past.

It is still possible for successful family stories to have elements of mystery, adventure, historical fiction and humour, but the contemporary family story is able to offer much more than that, particularly in the area of characterisation and theme. Moreover, social skills such as communication, adjusting to change, participating effectively as members of a variety of social groups and developing appropriate interpersonal behaviour in different social settings can be improved by reading and discussing family stories. Skilful authors encourage children to examine their own families against the background of a variety of situations, and to think about the roles of all members within the family unit. Sex role stereotyping of male and female adults is frequently questioned with a variety of models available for girls to consider.

Teachers enriching their literature program with such stories have a powerful means of helping students reflect on the issues and questions raised, and gain a greater insight into their own and other Australian families.

The following teaching unit offers a range of stories from picture books to novels that can be successfully used with young independent readers in years 3-7. There are

suggestions for introducing a topic that explores the concept of family as well as ideas for creating interest in children's own families. Recommended Australian titles are included with brief annotations and suggestions for specific classroom activities.

Suggestions for introducing the topic

In introducing the general concept of what a family is and how each family is different, the teacher might begin by describing his/her family using the broadest possible interpretation. Discussion could extend to a famous family e.g. the Royal Family or a well-known Australian or local family. Photos collected from newspapers or magazine articles or children's family photos could lead to small group discussion on family likenesses and family names.

Peter Spier's book *People* (World's Work) is an excellent discussion starter for raising questions like:

What happens at breakfast in your family?
How does your family celebrate birthdays and Christmas?
What language does your family speak at home?

A selection of multiple copies of picture books for use in small groups can give the children a further focus for thinking and discussing. The following books from the annotated list are particularly useful:

Graham, Bob. *First There Was Frances.*
Hunt, Nan. *Whistle up the Chimney.*
Ormerod, Jan. *101 Things to Do with a Baby.*

Both pictures and text can be the stimulus for children to explore the family roles of characters in the story and make comparisons. They might be asked to:

- look carefully at the expressions on the faces of all family members during the discussions about Mrs Mack's future *(Whistle Up the Chimney)*
- discuss what grandma is wearing and what she does *(First There Was Frances)*
- find out what father does with the baby *(101 Things to Do with a Baby).*

An alternative introduction to this topic could include the showing of the film *Family Tree* (27 minutes). This award-winning drama from the South Australian Film Corporation traces the adventures of three children who set out to save their favourite place, an old tree, from the clutches of a developer. In South Australia it is available on video from the Educational Technology Centre (VT 1457). Other enquiries should be directed to: Helene Griffiths, South Australian Film Corporation, 113 Tapleys Hill Road, Hendon. SA. 5014, telephone: (08) 45 2277.

Viewing of the film could be followed by class discussion on buildings, objects etc. which are important in class members' families. Examples of further activities to help children to better understand their own family include:

- children create their own family tree (they will need to find examples in encyclopaedias or other books first)
- children and teachers bring baby photographs from home and guess who is who
- children interview elderly relatives about their childhood and record the results either on video/audio tape or in written form (they will need to be taught interview skills before attempting this)

- each child writes a few sentences or paragraphs about how she/he perceives her/himself in the family e.g. responsibilities, ability to make decisions, money matters, freedom.

Further sessions for younger children

Suggested response to specific books:

Dann, Max. *One Night at Lottie's House*

Find all the references to Arthur's house and parents and compare them with Lottie's and your own. Compose a brief letter/telegram/postcard or record a telephone conversation in which Arthur explains to his parents why they should come and collect him immediately.

Mattingley, Christobel. *The Angel with a Mouth Organ*

What do you think Anna and Lena missed when they had to leave their homeland?

Imagine you are one of the girls in the story and keep a diary for two weeks which you hope will be read by your grandchildren describing your first Christmas in Australia.

Mattingley, Christobel. *The Windmill at Magpie Creek*

Make a list of Tim's chores on the farm and compare them with your own.

Ask your parents how they helped you to overcome your fear of something, e.g. the dark, and have a small group discussion on how you would now go about helping someone else.

Todd, Trevor. *Old Sam, Jasper and Mr Frank*

Write three sentences or a paragraph about the train trip as Jasper may have described it to his brothers.

Act out a conversation between Beryl and Sam while he is in hospital in which she tells him what Jasper is doing with the pigeons.

Further sessions for older children

Suggested response to specific books:

Balderson, Margaret. *A Dog Called George*

Discuss the characteristics which Tony and George had in common. Imagine that you find an Old English Sheepdog (or any other longhaired animal) on the way to school. Describe how you and your family care for it, keeping in mind how your pets are usually cared for.

French, Simon. *Cannily, Cannily*

Make a list of how people in your class felt the first day they started at a new school or in a new club or sports team. Compare the list with the way Trevor described his feelings.

Write a paragraph describing the first house you can remember living in using the sentence 'The house we lived in was . . ' as a model beginning.

Klein, Robin. *Hating Alison Ashley*

Act out the conversation between Alison and her mother in which Alison described her first visit to Erica's house.

Find three different versions of the folktale, Snow White ..... and examine the character of the stepmother in them. Compare her behaviour with that of Erica's prospective stepfather.

Norman, Lilith. *The Shape of Three*

Discuss with one other person how your family usually spends Sunday morning. Compare your morning with that of the two families in the story.

Imagine you are one of the three boys and write a letter to a school friend describing how you feel about the mix-up.

O'Neill, Judith. *Jess and the River Kids*

Invite someone who was a child during World War II in Australia and someone who was in Europe to visit your class and interview them about their memories of how they and their families lived at that time. Plan the interviews beforehand so that all members of the class are able to participate.

Compare what Jess and her family did on Sundays with what your own family does.

Park, Ruth. *Callie's Castle*

Divide the class into groups of oldest, youngest, middle and only children. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of your particular place in the family.

Draw/make a model of/describe in words your ideal private hideaway and make a list of rules for your family to obey if they want to visit you there.

Park, Ruth. *Playing Beatie Bow*

Discuss what differences it made to Abigail, an only child living with her mother, when she suddenly found herself part of a reasonably large family.

Draw the Bow family tree (with dates where available), using the clues given in the book. Re-examine the family trees which you compiled earlier and see if any of them go back as far as the Bows'.

Final session

Children look back individually over books read and discussed and try to identify a family or families with whom they have something in common. In pairs, children attempt to define roles of individual family members as seen in the books they have read. In small groups, using large sheets of paper to record their findings, children identify the elements of what makes a family. Whole class then tries to create a definition of the word *family*, using members' own ideas as well as more formal dictionary definitions.

Resources for a unit on Australian families, Years 3-7

Picture books

Graham, Bob. *First there was Frances,* Lothian.
A very simple story which shows, mainly through the illustrations, the expansion of a family from one woman to so many that they are forced to move to the country.

Hunt, Nan. *Whistle up the Chimney,* illustrated by Craig Smith, Collins.
An elderly woman whose family wants her to go into an old folks home refuses to leave her home. The load of firewood which she buys from the railways leads to a series of wonderful adventures throughout the winter.

Ormerod, Jan. *101 Things to do with a Baby,* Puffin.
A very simple picture book which portrays a loving family situation.

Books for younger children

Dann, Max. *One Night at Lottie's House,* Oxford University Press.
A small boy from a rather conservative, well-ordered household discovers that his friend, Lottie, enjoys a very different lifestyle when he stays the night in her home.

Mattingley, Christobel. *The Angel with a Mouth Organ,* illustrated by Patricia Mullins, Hodder & Stoughton.
A Christmas story with a difference which begins in Europe during World War II. The father becomes separated from the rest of the family but the story ends happily with the group emigrating to Australia.

Mattingley, Christobel. *The Windmill at Magpie Creek,* Hodder & Stoughton.
A young boy is afraid both of heights and of the magpies which live near the windmill. How he overcomes these fears when his father's illness means that he must climb the important windmill on the farm is sensitively told.

Todd, Trevor. *Old Sam, Jasper and Mr Frank,* Puffin.
When an Aboriginal family moves in next door to Sam and Beryl Lindsay, initial distrust is eventually replaced by a warm friendship which develops between the old man and one of the boys, based on an interest in pigeons.

Books for older children

Balderson, Margaret. *A Dog Called George,* Oxford University Press.
In comparison with the other members of his lively, clever family, Tony, the youngest member, seems rather slow and dreamy. When he finds George, a stray Old English Sheepdog, for the first time Tony feels useful and needed.

French, Simon. *Cannily, Cannily,* Angus & Robertson.
Because of his parents' itinerant lifestyles, Trevor has attended numerous schools. Eventually his parents realise that, as the boy approaches adolescence, he needs the opportunity to develop long-lasting relationships with his peers as well as with his loving family.

Klein, Robin. *Hating Alison Ashley,* Puffin.
While recognised mainly for its outstanding portrayal of life in the upper grades of an Australian primary school, *Hating Alison Ashley* also reveals a very realistic picture of family life in a single parent, working class family.

Norman, Lilith. *The Shape of Three,* Lions.
Using the device of twins separated at birth and brought up in very different family situations, Norman explores the effect of environment upon a child's social, religious and intellectual development.

O'Neill, Judith. *Jess and the River Kids,* Beaver.
A small town on the River Murray during World War II is the setting for this story about a lively, independent girl from a happy, rather traditional family and her friendship with two boys left to look after themselves on a houseboat when their parents take a younger child to Melbourne to be treated for poliomyelitis.

Park, Ruth. *Callie's Castle,* Angus & Robertson.
Callie feels left out when her widowed mother remarries and has three more children. However the solution to the girl's problems is provided by her elderly grandfather who builds her a place of her own.

Park, Ruth. *Playing Beatie Bow,* Puffin.
Past and present mingle effectively in this outstanding historical fantasy about a girl whose resentment of her parents' separation prevents her from establishing satisfying relationships with either of them.

Access to Australia's Past

A novel/film study featuring
'Playing Beatie Bow'

Colleen O'Sullivan

A confused adolescent girl runs along deserted, concrete pavements, past restored doll-like terraces, overshadowed by the giant glass and steel structures of a twentieth century city. Suddenly an invisible curtain reveals a world of acrid smells, hearty humanity and market commerce. Abigail has inexplicably been transported back to the nineteenth century. Within minutes she finds herself entangled in the family and life of eleven year old Beatie Bow. In this unfamiliar world Abigail discovers new friendships, insights and certainties, and so too do the many thousands of readers whom she, through her creator Ruth Park, lures into this unfamiliar milieu.

Printed literature provides access to Australia's past

Playing Beatie Bow is an excellent example of how literature set in Australia's past can give children an insight into their country's history, and can help them develop a sense of personal connection with the past and a sense of being part of an ever changing present. Through such books children can begin to see that their lifetime will become someone else's history.

In the upper primary years, Australian history and particularly nineteenth century Australian history, occupies a significant place in social studies programs. In developing children's understanding of various topics in Australian history there is a large range of *non-fiction* texts to draw from. There is also much *fiction* which can supplement the program including picture books, novels, poetry, diaries, films, songs etc.

Illustrated versions of Australian poetry such as *A Bush Christening* or *With My Swag All On My Shoulder* can provide a visual representation of Australian social history. A novel/television series like *Seven Little Australians* can give children an insight into family life in past years and challenge them to make comparisons with their own lives. A biography such as *Eleanor, Elizabeth* can help them see the importance of personal recollections in providing a record of our past. A novel like *The Chinese Boy* is a powerful and emotive story through which to understand living conditions, social structures etc. during an historical period.

What about celluloid literature?

Despite the potential educational value of literature, we are deluding ourselves if we do not acknowledge that television and video have a far greater attraction for our students than books.

For too long teachers and parents have denied the positive influence of the audiovisual media and have dismissed it as a vulgar, intrusive part of our culture. This perception is not much different from puritanical attitudes to written literature in past centuries.

It is important that in the classroom we validate our children's interaction with this modern form of literature as a worthwhile leisure activity. We need also to help children analyse and reflect on the enjoyment they get from television and video just as we have traditionally done with printed literature.

It may be that in doing so we lure our reluctant readers back into the world of print. After all, many adults have been tempted by the popular well-packaged novel that has appeared after a highly promoted television series or film. The 'Winners' television series has proved very popular with 10-14 year olds and has influenced many children to read the Penguin series of novels. *Playing Beatie Bow* is much more accessible to inexperienced readers after they have seen the film and are more familiar with accent, characters and particularly the historical setting.

The following classroom approaches which are designed for years 5-7 illustrate how films and novels set in Australia's past can be used for closer study in order to:

- provide insights into Australian history
- help students develop their personal viewing responses
- help students gain a better appreciation of the connections and differences between media literature and printed literature.

These approaches can be used with most of the resources listed at the end of this section. Examples are given for the film *Playing Beatie Bow*.

Validating the viewing experience

Classroom discussion and activities need to reinforce for children that celluloid literature is a valuable and characteristic part of our culture and deserving of serious and critical consideration as it is being enjoyed. Many of the activities that we use with books can be adapted for films. Following are examples of activities which can be used with historical films like *Playing Beatie Bow*.

- Build up a *class scrap book on a film* to be shown. Include:
  - photographs and articles on the historical period depicted in the film
  - newspaper and magazine articles on the making of the film
  - a variety of advertisements for the film
  - video, TV and film reviews that have appeared.

  Later include copies of letters that students write to an actor/actress or producer (and the replies!).
- Just before watching an historical film such as *Playing Beatie Bow* ask different groups of students to be aware of one *feature of film production* which they have

to report back on e.g. use of music, impressions of colour, use of close-ups, non-musical sound effects, good scenes for a preview clip.

- Help students *recapture the viewing experience.* As with a reading experience they need the opportunity for unguided reflection and discussion. It is *their* personal thoughts rather than the *teacher's* that can provide a more valuable basis for further refinement of response. These initial responses can be recorded through students:
  - jotting freely in their reading journals
  - writing down any questions that they have
  - spontaneously sharing their ideas with a partner
  - completing a series of open-ended sentence beginnings, e.g.

    The kidnap scene left me feeling .....
    I wonder why Beatie .....
    When the fire started in the shop I expected that .....
    At the end I felt .....
    I don't know why Judah .....
    I felt thoroughly irritated when .....
    I understood Abigail when she .....

These initial responses can later form the basis for whole class or group work, e.g.

- all of the questions could be collated and displayed so that children can then choose the questions they want to discuss further
- five recurring questions could provide the basis for whole class discussion
- children in small groups might share and comment on each other's personal jottings
- small groups could share ideas on particular topics before reporting back to the whole class.

- Study a number of *preview clips* shown on television or video. Then after watching the historical film decide which scenes in the film would be suitable for a preview clip and write up the accompanying monologue. This could be done as a whole class exercise or in small groups.
- Use an historical film as the basis for *writing activities.* For example get students to:
  - translate the opening scenes of a film into the first chapter of a book
  - write a school report for one of the characters
  - write in script form a scene from the film
  - write an imaginary diary for one of the characters
  - capture in prose or poetry a memorable scene from the film.

Making connections between celluloid and printed literature

When students read a book and see the film they quite naturally make comparisons. Activities described below may lead them to appreciate better the connections and differences between celluloid literature and printed literature.

- Questions such as the following help students focus on their reading and viewing responses:
  - What parts of the film did you like best?
  - What parts of the film were you disappointed with?
  - Why do you think film makers make changes to novels? Do you think all the changes in *Playing Beatie Bow* were necessary?
  - What did you think of the beginning and ending of the film? How did they compare with the book?
  - Try to recall the many different sounds that were in the film. Did you get impressions of sounds as you were reading the book?
  - Did you think the timeslip parts were handled better in the book or the film?
  - Do you usually like to see the film before you read the book or vice-versa?
  - What are some of the common features of films and books as well some of the differences?

- A closer study might involve showing the first ten minutes of the film again and re-reading the first chapter (or two) of the book. What parts of the book have been captured on film? What parts of the book have not been included? Do the characters in the film seem the same as in the book? Is the historical period represented differently in the film and the book? What has the producer introduced into the film that was not in the book?

- Have children share other books that have been turned into films e.g. *Anne of Green Gables;* or films that have been written up as books e.g. *Star Wars, Ghostbusters, Return of the Jedi.*

Providing a further historical perspective

The viewing/reading experience of an historical novel and the follow-up discussion and activities described above will increase children's perceptions of that period in Australia's history. Other activities such as those described below engage them in further discoveries about their Australian past.

- Photocopy a *newspaper* of the period depicted in a film or novel and use this for group reading and sharing. (Old newspapers can usually be found in large local libraries and photocopied.) Focus students' attention on layout, news stories, advertisements, government information, editorial features etc. Then get students to write their own newspaper items based on the book or film. Children may find it easier to write in a modern style. However, after studying a newspaper of the period they may well attempt the language conventions of that era. For example:

  ### *Rocks Review*

  You are a reporter on the local newspaper, *'The Rocks Review'*. Imagine that it was available in Sydney in the 1870s. It may have been read by people who lived up on the hill above where the Bows lived.

  You are to work with a team of journalists to produce an edition of this weekly newspaper. Your newspaper should contain:

local news e.g. about the loss of 'The Brothers'
advertisements e.g. for household articles available at that time
information about local residents e.g. a birth, wedding, death
information about forthcoming events e.g. the opening of a new building
feature articles e.g. 'The Ragged School'

Look in old newspapers for other ideas.

- Hold a *class debate* so that children compare aspects of an historical era with today, for example:

  'Life was more dangerous in the 1870s than it is today'.

  Naturally students will draw on perceptions raised by the historical novel but can be encouraged to find out more about this period of Australian history.

- Get children to *research their own family* and bring in old photos, family stories, family trees. In the typical ethnically diverse classroom of today this will open up the important issues of migration and the composition of Australian society.

- Have children put together a *collage* of photos depicting school life today. Ask them to imagine they have been drawn back into this year from the twenty-first century. What would they think about it all? What would their reactions be? When they return to the twenty-first century they are told to write a report on 'School in the 1980s'.

- Have students *write a report* on 'Family Life' in a particular period and setting in Australian history, under such headings as housing, dress, food, dangers, health, entertainment, education. Again they may draw on a novel or film but they can be guided to explore other texts e.g. songs, picture books.

- Arrange *excursions* to local sites of historical interest particularly those that can be linked with literature – oral, printed and celluloid. For example teachers living in Sydney who have used *Playing Beatie Bow* with their class could arrange a walking tour of The Rocks area.

- *Brainstorm* some 'impossibilities' that might come about in the next hundred years e.g. we may be able to read each other's thoughts. Are these any more impossible than the things that have happened since the period of an historical novel or film e.g. talking to each other over long distances, travelling by air etc.?

Young film-makers at work on an historical novel

Historical novels are popular subjects for film adaptation. Any historical novel with which a class is familiar can be used in this activity.

Students work in small groups as part of a team associated with some aspect of film making – casting, publicity, screenplay, wardrobe and set design. As they work towards completing their task, they are drawn back into the book to explore it more closely and move out from the book to further explore the relevant period of Australian history. The activity might culminate in students making costumes, sets etc. and in producing their own mini-films.

Student Workshop *Playing Beatie Bow*

Making a film is much more than acting and filming. It is a team effort involving lots of different jobs. Imagine you work for a film company that is going to make a film of the novel *Playing Beatie Bow*. Decide which team you think you would fit into best.

Casting team
Task: to choose a suitable person to play the role of Abigail or Beatie.

Work Plan: What is the character like? What kind of actress would be suitable?

- Advertise an audition.
- Script a section of the novel for the audition (consult with the screenplay team for this).
- Prepare for and hold an audition.

Publicity team
Task: to promote the film before it is released.

Work Plan: What different ways can you publicise the film?

- Arrange a TV or radio interview with the main actress.
- Hold a press conference to introduce the stars.
- Write a press statement e.g. 'Producer Searches For Star' (consult with the casting team for this).

Screenplay team
Task: to script sections of the novel.

Work Plan: Which parts of the novel should be included in the film?

- Decide on two or three sections to script e.g. Abigail arguing with her mother; Abigail waking up in the Bow's house.
- On the right hand side of your script write the dialogue. On the left hand side describe what the camera will see.

Set design team
Task: to find suitable locations for filming.

Work Plan: What sets have to be designed? What natural locations can be used?

- Draw up a list of scenes for the film i.e. interiors and exteriors.
- Research the Rocks Area of Sydney. Visit it if you can and trace the places mentioned in the book on a map of the Rocks.
- Collect photographs or make drawings of suitable sets for the film.

Wardrobe team
Task: to create costumes for the characters.

Work Plan: What kind of clothes did people wear in the late nineteenth century?

- Research this period of dress in the local and school libraries. Write to the Archives Office.
- Collect photographs or make your own drawings of clothes that you feel would be suitable for Abigail, Granny and Judah.

This paper does not attempt to give a definitive list of classroom approaches and activities that can be used with historical literature; but rather to show that this source of material, both printed and celluloid, provides many opportunities for extending our children's perceptions of their Australian history.

Access to Australia's past: a selection of available resources

Aldridge, James. *My Brother Tom,* Penguin.
Television series. (Small country town during the Depression)

Aldridge, James. *To Ride a Wild Pony,* Penguin.
(A small town on the Murray River during the Depression)

Aldridge, James. *The Broken Saddle,* Penguin.
(A small town during the Depression)

Alington, Gabriel. *The Stars are Upside Down,* Heinemann.
(Sponsored immigration to Australia and life on a selection mid-nineteenth century)

Brinsmead, Hesba. *Christmas at Longtime,* Angus & Robertson.
(Christmas on a Blue Mountains farm just before World War I)

Brinsmead, Hesba. *Longtime Passing,* Penguin.
(The Blue Mountains after World War I)

Brinsmead, Hesba. *Once There Was a Swagman,* Penguin.
(The Blue Mountains during the Depression)

Brinsmead, Hesba. *Longtime Dreaming,* Angus & Robertson.
(The Blue Mountains around World War II)

Clarke, Mavis Thorpe. *They Came South,* Landsdowne.
(A passage to Melbourne 1839 and bush life)

Donkin, Nance. *Best of the Bunch,* Collins.
(Children in Sydney during the early days of settlement)

Donkin, Nance. *House by the Water,* Penguin.
(The Reibey family in Sydney in the early 1800s)

Donkin, Nance. *Johnny Neptune,* Penguin.
(Sydney and the Hawkesbury during the early days of white settlement)

Drinkwater, Carol. *The Haunted School,* Penguin.
Television Series.
(A small country town in the late nineteenth century)

Facey, Bert. *A Fortunate Life,* Penguin.
Television Series.
(Western Australia – country life early this century)

Farmer, Graeme. *Golden Pennies,* Penguin.
ABC Television Series.
(Life on the goldfields in the 1850s.)

Fatchen, Max. *Conquest of the River,* Methuen.
(Riverboat adventures on the Murray River at the turn of the century)

Fatchen, Max. *The River Kings,* Methuen.
(Riverboat adventures on the Murray River at the turn of the century)

Fatchen, Max. *The Spirit Wind,* Methuen.
(Life on an outrigger and South Australia late nineteenth century; traditional Aboriginal culture)

Ferrier, Susanne. *Lola,* Collins. Picture book.
(A humorous comic strip of life on the goldfields)

Ferrier, Susanne. *Ned A Legend,* Collins. Picture book.
(A humorous melting pot of nineteenth century Australian history)

Frances, Helen. *Edge of Fear,* Penguin.
(Emigrating from England to Tasmania in the 1820s)

Frances, Helen. *The Devil's Stone,* Omnibus.
(South Australia in the 1850s)

Gleeson, Libby. *Eleanor, Elizabeth,* Angus & Robertson.
(Bush life in the 1950s is contrasted with the 1890s)

Gulpilil. *Stories of the Dreamtime,* Collins. Illustrated.
(Traditional Aboriginal customs and stories)

Hepworth, John. *The Paper Boy,* Penguin.
Channel Ten. Available on film from State Film Library and as a video school pack from CBS/Fox Video.
(Innercity life in the 1930s)

Hepworth, John. *Top Kid,* Penguin.
Channel Ten. Available on film from State Film Library and as a video school pack from CBS/Fox Video.
(Catholic family in the 1940s)

Hurle, Garry. *The Saddler's Grand-daughter,* Penguin.
(A rural community in the 1920s — three stories)

Ingpen, Robert. *Click Go the Shears,* Collins. Picture book.
(Life in the bush late last century)

King, John Anthony; Lawson, Henry. *Andy's Gone With Cattle,* Collins. Picture book. (Life in the outback late nineteenth century)

King, John Anthony. *Farewell to Old England Forever,* Collins. Picture book.
(Convict life)

King, John Anthony. *The Wild Colonial Boy,* Collins. Picture book.
(From convict to bushranger mid nineteenth century)

Manifold, John. *The Penguin Australian Songbook,* Penguin.
(Traditional Australian folksongs grouped under historical settings and periods)

Marshall, Alan. *I Can Jump Puddles,* Penguin.
Television Series SBS.
(Country life in the 1930s)

Martin, David. *The Chinese Boy,* Hodder & Stoughton.
(Conditions of the Chinese on the goldfields)

Martin, David, *The Girl Who Didn't Know Kelly,* Hutchinson.
(1880s at Beechworth – Ned Kelly)

Martin, David. *The Man in the Red Turban,* Penguin.
(Along the Murray River during the Depression)

Moore, Neil. *With My Swag All On My Shoulder,* Collins.
(The life of a swagman late nineteenth century).

Paice, Margaret. *Colour in the Creek,* Penguin.
Nine network television series produced by PBL Productions.
(Life during the depression looking for gold)

Paice, Margaret. *Over the Mountain,* Angus & Robertson.
(A gold digging town in NSW in the nineteenth century)

Page, Michael; Ingpen, Robert. *The Great Bullocky Race,* Hill of Content. Illustrated.
(Bullock teams on their journey across South Australia late last century)

Park, Ruth. *Playing Beatie Bow,* Penguin.
Film S.A. Film Corporation; Available on video CEL.
(Life in The Rocks area of Sydney 1870s)

Park, Ruth. *Come Danger, Come Darkness,* Hodder & Stoughton.
(The penal colony of Norfolk Island)

Paterson, A.B., Hole, Quentin. *A Bush Christening,* Collins. Picture book.
(Life in the bush in the nineteenth century)

Paterson, A.B., Macarthur-Onslow, Annette. *The Man From Snowy River,* Collins. Picture book.
(Bush life in the late nineteenth century)

Paterson, A.B., Hole, Quentin. *The Man From Ironbark,* Collins.
Picture book.
(Bush life in the late nineteenth century)

Piddington, Phyllis. *Southern Rainbow,* Oxford University Press.
(Pioneer English settlers in South Australia 1837)

Roennfeldt, Robert. *A Day on the Avenue,* Kestrel/Penguin. Picture book.
(A suburban street 1950s)

Rose, Ronald. *Five Honest Guineas,* Hodder & Stoughton.
(Araluen Valley goldfields)

Scott, Bill. *The Second Penguin Australian Songbook,* Penguin.
(Traditional Australian folksongs)

Spence, Eleanor. *The Seventh Pebble,* Oxford University Press.
(A small country town in the 1930s)

Stow, Randolph & Steadman, Ralph. *Midnite,* Oxford University Press.
(Bushranging fantasy set in Western Australia)

Thiele, Colin. *The Shadow on the Hills,* Rigby.
(A South Australian farming community early this century)

Thiele, Colin. *Sun on the Stubble,* Rigby.
(A South Australian farming community between the wars)

Thiele, Colin. *The Valley Between,* Rigby.
(A country town in South Australia in the 1920s.)

Turner, Ethel; Laroche, Sandra. (illus.). *Seven Little Australians,* Landsdowne.
Television Series ABC
(Family life at the turn of the century)

Walker, Kath. *Stradbroke Dreamtime,* Angus & Robertson.
(Incidents of the author's childhood and stories of the Dreamtime)

Performing Australian Poetry

Sean Monahan

Discovering Australian Poetry

Teaching poetry using poems that children don't like is about as sensible as teaching comedy using jokes they don't find funny. Wise teachers have always known this and modern reader reception theory supports their view that a poem means nothing to readers who feel nothing for it. Since there are thousands more poems available than we can possibly find time for in our classrooms, it seems sensible to stick to ones children actually like. And which are those? One way to begin finding out is to run a poetry competition. Simply read your class a varied selection of about fifteen poems and take a vote to find out which they enjoyed. If you then discuss their choices with them you will probably find the following to be true:

- most children like poetry that has regular rhythm and rhyme
- most like poetry that tells a funny or exciting story
- most enjoy comic and ridiculous poetry
- most respond to beauty — of both sound and feeling.

Australian teachers are fortunate that many of our early poets wrote just the kinds of poems children enjoy: poems with good rhyme and rhythm, poems full of beauty and emotion, poems that tell good stories. The 'adult' poems of Lawson, Paterson, Dennis, Gilmore and other early Australian poets rightly feature strongly in school anthologies and many are available in superb picture editions. There is nothing better for poems: poetry thrives on space and arresting visuals and the more picture books you can buy for your poetry library the better.

Most of us know the older Australian poets but what of the moderns? Until recently I myself was shockingly ignorant. I began my education via Oxford University Press *A First Australian Poetry Book* and *A Second Australian Poetry Book*. I found the second the better of the two but both proved useful starting points. They both contain plenty of the wicked comedy children enjoy: Doug Macleod, Wilbur Howcroft, Max Fatchen, Michael Dugan and Eric Rolls are all good comic writers and the first three bear comparison with the best anywhere. Both books also contain fine serious poems by writers such as Anne Bell, Bill Scott, Furnley Maurice, Barbara Giles, Lydia Pender, Kath Walker, Pixie O'Harris and Roderic Quinn. These poems remind us not to underestimate children. Yes, they do like comedy and nonsense – but not all the time! An undiluted diet of *silly* poems is as indigestible as an undiluted diet of icecream. So don't fill your poetry library with nothing but light

stuff and then wonder why your children tire of poetry. Give them access to a rich mixture of Australian poetry and you will find it is the exciting, the beautiful, the sad and the joyous that continue to appeal long after the funny and the silly have palled.

But where to find this rich mixture? The list at the end will give some help. Having persuaded your librarian to buy all the books on that list, you can then browse through the acknowledgements pages to find other books by the poets you find that your children enjoy.

Let children browse

Having established a good library of Australian children's poetry, the next thing is to bring it into the classroom and let the browsing begin! Browsing lessons are very simple – and very valuable. All you need are plenty of poetry books and a simple instruction such as 'Find any five poems that you really like about Australia' or the bush, parents, cities, childhood or any other theme you like. The children then simply browse through the books provided, searching for poems they like on the topic set.

In such a lesson they learn the priceless habit of reading for pleasure. Reading poetry is a lot easier than reading stories: poems are shorter and children can jump around a book and skip poems they do not like and indulge in poems they do. And while they are doing so, the teacher can wander round chatting to them, sharing their pleasure, finding out more about what poems they like and suggesting others they might enjoy. If poetry educates, it does so directly through pleasurable experience. Lessons in which children just enjoy reading poems are the most important lessons there are! Discussion can sometimes deepen understanding of the original experience but it is always subordinate: without pleasurable experience, discussion is a waste of time.

If you wish to add further purpose to their browsing, let children make illustrated booklets of the poems they select – to be read by others in later browsing lessons. Alternatively, let them use the poems in an activity that I believe is central to good poetry teaching – performance!

Performance — the best way to experience poetry

My basic premise in poetry teaching is that if a poem is good enough, and if a child is exposed to it long enough in a pleasurable way, nothing much else is necessary. For years I looked for ways to achieve this. *Long enough* so often seemed to destroy *pleasure.* Every time I tried to spend a decent length of time on a single poem, my students became bored and restless. Then at last I discovered an activity in which long enough and pleasure could coexist. That activity was the simple one of preparing for a performance. I found that students were happy to read a poem over and over and over again – so long as they were working to get a performance right. It was so simple. So effective. Any child who reads a poem with pleasure twenty times over, has been spoken to by that poem in profound ways: its rhythms have impressed themselves on the brain; its meanings have had time to work on mind and spirit. I soon found, too, that preparation for performance inevitably led to plenty of discussion of meaning ('You're saying that line wrong. What it means is . . . '); and discussion of tone ('Should we say that line more sadly . . . ?'). A further benefit was that after so many repetitions children found that they had, without effort, memorised the poem.

The other great value of performance is that it increases enjoyment. While many people find it hard to read poetry silently, few can resist a good performance. The English poet Pam Ayres is popular partly because her verse is undemanding but mainly because she is a superb performer. If only those who perform more demanding poetry were always as good as her. Some are – and it is well worth buying their records for the school library. Top of my list would be records of 'The Barrow Poets', a group of English actor/musicians who perform poetry in ways that will hold your children spellbound. Then come the records of Leonard Teale, an Australian performing Australian poetry. Finally I recommend the tape *Fun with Poetry* which is full of lively performance of Australian poetry by groups of Australian schoolchildren. Details of all three can be found at the end of this article.

All poems are 'performance poems'!

Now for some practicalities. The first thing to make clear is that I am not talking about 'performance poems'. I hate the term. It implies that there is a limited class of poetry (those that blatantly depend upon sound) which we perform while the rest (the 99 per cent that includes all the richest poems in our culture) can be treated any old how! My view is that every poem is a performance poem and to illustrate that crucial point I want now to look at a variety of ways students have presented two poems, one old and one new, neither of which fits into that constricting category 'performance poetry'.

Old Botany Bay by Mary Gilmore

(1) I'm old
Botany Bay;
(2) Stiff in the joints
(3) Little to say

(1) I am he
Who paved the way
(4) That you might walk
At your ease today

(2) I was the conscript
Sent to hell
(3) To make in the desert
The living well;

(1) I bore the heat,
(2) I blazed the track –
(34) Furrowed and bloody
Upon my back,
(1) I split the rock;
(2) I felled the tree;
(34) The nation was –
Because of me!

(1) Old Botany Bay
Taking the sun
From day to day . . .
(2) Shame on the mouth
(23) That would deny
(234) The knotted hands
(1234) That set us on high

The Optimist by Michael Dugan

(1) We shouldn't complain, (4) he said.
(2) It's good for the crops, (4) he said.
(3) The cockies need it
(1) it'll fill the dams
(1234) the cows will feed this summer

(4) The rain poured down
(34) till the crops washed out
(234) the dam walls broke
(1234) and the stock were drowned
(4) and still he cried
(1) we shouldn't complain,
(2) we need the rain
(3) we needed the rain
(4) we needed the (1234) gurgle

Experimenting with multivoice reading

The numbers 1,2,3,4 above indicate a multivoice division into four voices made by students who prepared these two poems for group performance. The idea was to reinforce meaning through the selection of voices. Use these scripts with your own students and you will see, I hope, why they opt for a crescendo effect in some places, why they decide to have voices in unison for certain lines and so on. You will also see how multivoice reading enables a group to achieve better results than any single child could produce unaided. Even the best child reader is no Richard Burton: but a group can come close to Burton by using their different voices sensibly – a high voice for one line, a low voice for another, the extrovert for accents and so on. Multivoice reading, unlike solo child readings, produces consistently lively performances for the whole class to enjoy. It is also marvellous for non-stressful oral reading practice. Getting pronunciation, tone, pace, stress etc. right for a line or two at a time is far easier than getting it right for a whole poem. This makes multivoice reading tremendous for building confidence in reluctant or nervous readers.

Those who are familiar with *readers theatre* will find the idea of multivoice reading easy to understand. I coined the term mainly to distinguish it from 'choral reading'. Choral reading involves voices speaking in unison for sustained periods; multivoice reading uses individual voices, each taking just a line or two at a time. Choral reading is hard even for trained professionals to do well, it is incantatory and suited to a very limited range of poetry; multivoice reading is easy to do well, suits most poems and makes the merest novice sound good. Choral reading will do little for poetry in your classroom: multivoice can do so much, so swiftly.

Simple drama and sound effects bring some poems to life

The meaning of many poems can be further emphasised through judicious use of simple mime and sound effects. I stress *many* poems and *simple* effects. I am not just thinking of those early bush ballads which positively beg to be dramatised. I am thinking rather of a group who performed 'The Optimist' with one student blowing a

gale while two others gradually raised a green cloth (signifying water) until by the final line the readers were completely hidden from view. And I am thinking of a group who performed 'Botany Bay' to an accompaniment of clinking chains and a simple mime for the hobbling figure of verse one, the road building of verse two, the well digging of verse three and so on. The best effects are simple; complex dramatisation is never necessary!

Music – poetry's most useful ally

For poems where multivoice reading is inappropriate, there is always music. Why do we use it so rarely? Films use it all the time to establish mood and so should we. Many of the most moving readings I have heard have been to a backing of music. Try reading 'Old Botany Bay' with the opening of Zamfir's *Lonely Shepherd* or Albinoni's *Adagio in G minor* playing softly in the background and you'll soon see what I mean. Music always enhances a child's solo reading. If the voice is lifeless, the music supplies the missing emotion. More often the music actually lifts the performer: the gabbler slows down; the deadpan shows some emotion. Another value of musical performance is that preparing for it involves that extended pleasurable contact with poetry which is so vital. The only way to find suitable music is to read the poem again and again with different pieces until you find one that fits; having found it, you then have to read the poem many more times to achieve a perfect match of voice to music.

Let classrooms ring to the sound of Australian poetry

There is so much Australian children can learn about themselves and their culture from the richness of Australian poetry; and performance is, I believe, the best way to experience that richness. Some teachers avoid the method because they feel it can only be done by extroverts and actors. Not so! I am neither extrovert nor actor and I have used the method for years. Others avoid it because they don't quite know how to start. If you are in that position, you may find the book *Fun With Poetry* useful: it contains plenty of classroom performance activities to help you get started. So do please give performance a chance. You will find your children love it. And what a truly marvellous thing it will be if, in our bicentennial year and beyond, thousands of primary classrooms ring to the sound of children revelling in the poetry that is such a vital part of their cultural heritage!

Useful resources

Referred to in the text

Factor, June (ed.). *A First Australian Poetry Book,* Oxford University Press.

Giles, Barbara (ed.). *A Second Australian Poetry Book,* Oxford University Press.

Monahan, Sean. *Fun with Poetry,* Longman Cheshire. (Book and tape.)

The Barrow Poets. *Barrow Collection,* Argo Records, (Argo PLP 1072).

Teale, Leonard. *My Country,* Pacific Records.

Anthologies

Convernton, June and Smith, C. (eds). *Petrifying Poems,* Omnibus.

Davis, R. (ed.). *The Illustrated Treasury of Australian Verse,* Nelson.

Dugan, Michael (ed.). *Stuff and Nonsense,* William Collins.

Fowler, M.M. (ed.). *Land of the Rainbow Gold,* Nelson.

Heylen, J. and Jellett, C. (eds). *Someone is flying balloons,* Omnibus.

Mappin, Alf (ed.). *Taking the Sun,* Longman Cheshire.

Saxby, Joyce (ed.). *One Hundred Poems Chosen for Children,* Angus & Robertson.

Thompson A.K. (ed.). *The Four Corners Vols I and II,* Jacaranda.

Thompson, B. (ed.). *Once Around the Sun,* Oxford University Press.

Thwaite, A. (ed.). *All Sorts of Poems,* Angus & Robertson.

Individual poets

Dennis, C.J. *A Book for Kids,* Angus & Robertson.

Fatchen, Max. *Songs for My Dog,* Kestrel.

Gilmore, Mary. *The Singing Tree,* Angus & Robertson.

Lawson, Henry. *Poems of Henry Lawson,* Ure Smith.

Macleod, Doug. *The Fed Up Family Album,* Kestrel.

O'Harris, Pixie. *Pixie O'Harris Treasury of Animal Verse,* Golden.

Pender, Lydia. *Morning Magpies,* Angus & Robertson.

Rolls, E. *Miss Strawberry Verses,* Kestrel.

Walker, Kath. *My People,* Jacaranda.

Picture books

Davis, B. (ed.) *The Illustrated Treasury of Australian Verse,* Nelson.

Gilmore, Mary; Pender, Lydia. *Poems to Read to Young Australians,* Hamlyn.

Huxley, D. (ed.). *Australian Poems are Fun,* Lansdowne.

Lawson, Henry; King, J.A. (illus.). *Andy's Gone with the Cattle,* Collins.

Mannix, Max. (illus.). *The Wild Colonial Boy,* Dent.

Niland, Deborah (illus.). *The Drover's Dream,* Collins.

Paterson, A.B.; Huxley, Dee. (illus.). *A Children's Treasury,* Landsdowne.

Paterson, A.B.; Niland, Deborah (illus.). *Mulga Bill's Bicycle,* William Collins.

Paterson, A.B.; Hole, Q. (illus.). *A Bush Christening,* William Collins.

Paterson, A.B.; Digby, D. (illus.). *Waltzing Matilda,* William Collins.

Conducting an Author Study

Victoria Roberts and
Vivienne Nicoll

Introduction

There are a number of very prolific authors and illustrators of children's books in Australia. An examination of one author's work often reveals common themes or concerns, as well as characteristic elements of style. Primary age children involved in reading a number of different titles by the one author, and in discussing their reading with other children, can gain insights into the process of writing and the nature of literature.

An author study is not difficult to organise in a classroom. For our example, we have selected Robin Klein, since she is unarguably one of the most popular authors today for Australian primary school children. The example we outline is just one way to conduct an author study — we are sure teachers will find many alternative ways of programming.

Our study involves the three elements we believe essential in any primary literature program:

- reading aloud by the teacher
- some intensive reading and sharing of books in a small group setting, with teacher interaction and guidance
- opportunities for wide reading of self-selected titles.

The activities we suggest in conjunction with children's reading, focus on the stories and on the way the author has created them. There are opportunities for choice within suggested activities, and it is our experience that additional worthwhile activities are often proposed by the children themselves in the course of the study.

Why conduct an author study?

An author study allows teachers and children to:

- gain insights into the way authors write
- search for common themes or concerns within an author's work
- identify and explore characteristic features of an author's style e.g. use of humour, dialogue, idiosyncratic use of language
- focus on a large number of books rather than only one title
- develop learners' literary awareness through a sharing of interpretations and opinions
- learn from others who have read different titles.

Which authors could be chosen for an author study?

Any author who is reasonably prolific is suitable. There needs to be sufficient titles to cater for the different reading abilities and needs of your students as well as for a variety of teaching strategies. You should, of course, choose an author whose work you have read and know well, and whose books you think your class will enjoy. Some Australian authors appropriate for this treatment are:

Colin Thiele	Joan Phipson
Mem Fox	Patricia Wrightson
Victor Kelleher	Ivan Southall
Eleanor Spence	Christobel Mattingley
Pamela Allen	Junko Morimoto
Hazel Edwards	Nance Donkin

There are other authors who at this stage have not yet produced sufficient material for our purpose, but who in time may provide you with further author study options,

e.g.	Simon French	Nadia Wheatley
	Dianne Bates	Morris Lurie
	Bron Nicholls	Michael Dugan

Which of the author's titles should I select?

We suggest you select:

- titles which are representative of the whole range of the author's work, including short stories and verse
- titles that allow for comparison and contrast of themes, characters, situations
- titles that allow for the variety of reading abilities within your class.

This does not mean that every title by a given author will be suitable for inclusion in the author study. Few authors confine their writing to a particular age group, and so, for example, a year 3 or 4 class may not yet be ready to enjoy Robin Klein's *Games* or *People Might Hear You.*

What resources shall I need?

The following resources are needed to implement an author study similar to the Robin Klein study we have developed:

- A single copy of the book chosen for serialisation
  [in our example, *The Enemies*]
- 5-6 copies of each of the titles selected for small group study. This means each child will have access to one book. For a class of 30 children we required:
  6 copies of *Boss of the Pool*
  6 copies of *Junk Castle*
  6 copies of *Hating Alison Ashley*
  at least 3 copies of *Thing* and
  Thingnapped
  at least 2 copies of *Penny Pollard's Diary,*
  Penny Pollard's Letters and
  Penny Pollard in Print

- Other titles by the author which you can locate and which you believe are appropriate for your class. Your teacher-librarian should be of great assistance here. You may find more than one copy of some titles. These books can be added temporarily to your classroom library and will be used for the wider individualised component of the program. We added:

  Snakes and Ladders; Ratbags and Rascals; Thalia the Failure; The Giraffe in Pepperell Street; Oodoolay; The Princess Who Hated It; Separate Places

- Printed or audiovisual information about the author, for example, biographical notes, interviews with the author, articles or published speeches by the author. There is a growing body of such material commercially published, given current classroom interest in children's literature and in the writing process. Some sources you might try are:

  The Storymakers (Oxford University Press), *Australian Children's Authors* (Macmillan), *Books Alive* (Nelson), *Meet the Author Posters* (Ashton Scholastic) *How Writers Write* (Methuen), *Don't Tell Lucy* (Methuen, Dimensions, Storyteller Strand)

- Any film/video adaptations of the author's works. We used:
  Storymakers Part One: Robin Klein (Film Australia).

A suggested program

The Robin Klein study has been planned with a year 3 or 4 class in mind. We suggest the unit span 5-6 weeks, but it could be shortened. The general plan for an author study involves the serial reading by the teacher of a novel, perhaps followed by ongoing or end-of-the-book activities; small-group reading of teacher-selected novels; individual, free-choice wide reading of other titles; and then a culminating period with activities designed for children to share what they have learned and to draw conclusions. A plan for a six week unit is outlined below.

Week	Teacher	Whole class	Individual
1	Reads *The Enemies*	Whole class activities-see Part one below	Children begin wide reading program
2 3 4	Teacher conducts conferences with groups and individuals and continues to read short stories and poems to class.	Group reading. Each child reads two titles and engages in the related activities.	Children given Reading Log. Each child selects books and activities and continues reading.
5 6	Plans discussion groups, organises retrieval charts and class book.	Whole class sharing, drawing of conclusions. Making of class book.	Complete Reading Log. Select work for class book.

Part one: Serial reading and associated activities

The Enemies (Duration: One week)

The story is relatively short, and if one chapter is read daily, the serial reading will take one week.

- Cover your copy of the book with paper, so that the title and cover illustration are hidden. Read Chapter 1 aloud. On a retrieval chart list what the class have learned about the main characters, Mary-Anna and Sandra. Discuss the characters' belongings, and from these try to make inferences about what sort of people they are. Uncover the book, and compare the class observations with Noela Young's illustration.
- Involve the class in making life-size cardboard cut outs or stuffed stocking dolls of the two girls. Dress them in school uniform and sit them at a spare desk. Put under each character's desk the kind of belongings which you think each is likely to have.
- Continue reading. As you do so, have children add to the lists begun in Chapter 1.
- At the end of Chapter 3, organise for groups of three children each to prepare a 'readers theatre' script, dramatisation or an oral reading of Chapter 3. You may need to make additional copies of this chapter available for this activity.
- Read Chapter 4 to page 43, '. . . . another shopping mall.' Discuss: 'What do you think has happened to the girls? What should they do?' Let children discuss in pairs what Mary-Anna and Sandra could do. Share these predictions for later confirmation. Continue reading. Discuss: 'What do you think of the way Robin Klein solves the girls' problem? Is it similar to our ideas, or not?'
- Read Chapter 5. Discuss the ending: 'Why are Sandra and Mary-Anna now friends? Is this credible? Are you now friendly with someone with whom you haven't always been on friendly terms? Why?'
- End-of-book activities might include:
  - creating an acrostic using Sandra's or Mary-Anna's name
  - drawing a cartoon of some event from the story involving the two girls
  - retelling the dilemma of being lost from the viewpoint of either Sandra or Mary-Anna
  - representing Chapters 4 and 5 as a story map.
- End-of-book discussion starters might include:
  - What did you like/dislike about the book?
  - How as readers do we get to know Sandra and Mary-Anna as people? (Draw from the children information such as facts told to us by the narrator; inferences drawn from the dialogue between the girls and from their actions.)

Children will need to refer back to the text for these activities, so you will need to plan for only what your resources will accommodate.

Part two: Group reading of teacher-selected novels

(Duration: Approximately three weeks)

For our study we suggest you divide the class into five groups each of about 5-6 children. Where possible, mixed ability groups are preferable. The complexity of the

text *Hating Alison Ashley* may lead to the formation of one or two groups of more able readers. Although all groups will be operating at the same time, the teacher can organise his or her week in such a way that opportunities exist for each group to work at one time intensively with the teacher, at another with minimal teacher supervision and support, and at another quite independently of teacher guidance. Often a contract approach is beneficial in managing class organisation for group work. The titles we have chosen for our groups are:

Group A: *Junk Castle*
Group B: *Boss of the Pool*
Group C: *Thing* and *Thingnapped*
Group D: *Hating Alison Ashley*
Group E: *Penny Pollard* books (3 titles)

In the three-week period allocated, each child will complete the reading of two novels and complete the related activities. Groups may remain stable, or be re-formed after each child has read one novel. The teacher needs to have planned a schedule of activities related to each group's reading, although there should be the flexibility for negotiation of ideas suggested by the children. The limited space available here prohibits us from detailing activities for each group. However, we have provided as a model for teachers our suggested group approaches for *Junk Castle* and *Boss of the Pool.*

Junk Castle

- Teacher reads aloud to group pp. 1-7. Talk about the title, the cover, the four children. Ask 'Who do you think Beatrice Binker was?' 'What do you think of Mr Drake?'
- Children continue to read by themselves.
- Plan at least one readers' circle conference per week.
- Discuss with the group pp. 48-60. The group can then choose to either tape an oral reading of the section for the rest of the class, or develop a 'readers theatre' or rehearsed dramatisation of it for sharing time.
- Children attempt to retell the above episode from Mr Drake's point of view.
- Discuss the ending. How else could Robin Klein have concluded the story? Who was Beatrice Binker?
- Read to the group *Keep Out* by Noela Young. Children compare this to *Junk Castle.*
- Group debate: 'Children require special places to play.'
- Children write a report of the events in *Junk Castle* for the local newspaper.
- Children role-play Peter Beale interviewing Irene, Mandy, Con and Splinter for his T.V. show.
- Children read the section about the construction of *Junk Castle* again and then make of model of it.
- Children write a letter to one of the book's characters, explaining why his/her actions are admired.

Boss of the Pool

- Teacher makes listening post tape of Chapter 1 for 'read along'. After group have listened to tape, discuss with teacher the story so far. 'What do you think of Shelley? Is her behaviour justified? How do you think the title and the cover illustration relate to this first chapter? If you were the author, how would you continue the story?'
- Children continue to read by themselves. The teacher may like to suggest to children that, as they read, they watch out for clues that Shelley's behaviour either changes or remains the same.
- Plan at least one readers' circle conference per week.
- Children construct Shelley's diary, making relevant entries from her point of view for each day of the vacation.
- Discuss pp. 42-49. 'Why do you think this chapter is important to the story? What events show you that Shelley is changing? Is this change believable?'
- Children prepare a rehearsed oral reading of this chapter for taping. The tape can be passed on to the next group.
- Discuss the ending. 'How had your attitude towards Shelley changed by the end? Was the title a good choice? Why? Was Ben the only Boss?'
- Role-play Shelley and her friends Megan, Petra and Denise discussing their holiday adventures. What would Shelley say about her holiday, and how would the others react?
- Write a letter to Shelley explaining how you feel about her at the end of the book.
- As a group, design a collage which represents for prospective readers the memorable events of the story. It may be helpful for children to first list the images created by the text which they would include in the collage, for instance, the image of Ben pressed against the hostel's glass door; Ben's posters and bear; a beachbag and towel; Shelley's picture for Ben; the pool, the new bathers and the medal. Children should be encouraged to re-read and to reflect carefully before deciding which scenes involving Shelley and Ben are most appropriate for inclusion in the collage.

Part three: Wide reading program

We suggest that this be undertaken through a contract system. Children may read any of the additional Robin Klein titles you have added to the class library (including single copies of the titles chosen for group reading), and also materials from which they learn about Robin Klein the author. The wide reading program may be allocated some of the language block time, but it is anticipated that much of the reading for the contract can be achieved during daily USSR time. A Reading Log and the activities list used for individual contracts follow.

Robin Klein Reading Log

Name: _____

Book for Group Reading: _____

Books for Wide Reading:

Book	Date	Comment

Refer to the Reading Response Sheet. Complete two activities. Record what you plan to do below.

Book	Activity
_____	_____
_____	_____

I _____ *Robin Klein because* _____

Our Robin Klein Reading Program

Select any two activities from this list. Use books that you have read for your Reading Log. Record the activities you have completed on your log.

■ Design a poster which you think will encourage other people to read Robin Klein's books.

□ Make a diorama of a scene from one of the stories you have read.

○ Design a game or crossword puzzle using the characters, places, events in Robin Klein's stories.

* With a friend write a play or Readers Theatre script based on a book or story you have both read.

\# You have been asked to introduce Robin Klein when she comes to speak at the school assembly. Write down what you would say. Remember to include some biographical details.

☆ Choose one of Robin Klein's poems and rehearse reading it aloud for our listening post tape. You may like to ask a friend to help with the reading. When your reading is ready to tape, workshop it on a friend and then book a taping time with the teacher.

★ Choose one of Robin Klein's picture books which you think younger children would enjoy. Practise reading it aloud, and workshop your reading with a friend. When you are ready to read it to someone in our brother/sister class, tell the teacher.

Part four: Whole class sharing

In the final fortnight of the suggested program, the teacher provides opportunities for children to share the stories and poems they have read, as well as the results of their various book-related activities. In addition, there should be some planned experiences through which children can explore and articulate their insights into Robin Klein's writing, drawing both on their reading of her work and the various biographical sources which they have consulted. (By this point each child will have read at least five different stories by the author.) The importance of discussion in this sharing period cannot be overemphasised. The aim is for children to draw upon their in-depth and wide reading experiences as a data pool from which they make some rudimentary literary generalisations. The teacher's role is to set tasks which will generate dis-

cussion, and, particularly in whole class discussion, to ask pertinent questions which will help children to make comparisons between the plots, characters and styles of the various stories they have read.

It is suggested that this culmination to the unit be introduced to the class by way of a series of focus questions:

- What kind of characters does Robin Klein create ? What do you like or dislike about them? (an exploration of character).
- What have we learned about Robin Klein and her writing?
- Why do you think Robin Klein wrote sequels for *Thing* and *Penny Pollard's Diary?*
- Could she write sequels for any of her other books? Which ones? Why? (an exploration of style).
- What kinds of things does Robin Klein write about? (an exploration of theme).

These questions can best be explored through discussion, employing a variety of classroom grouping strategies, as elaborated below. In attempting to explore all these questions we suggest that teachers try to explore one area of style in depth rather than rushing through the questions in a superficial manner.

Exploring character

Children are to explore the characters in one of the books from their two group reading experiences, and choose to join a small group of others who have also read that book. Before children move to their small group, the teacher explains the task, which is to attempt to answer these questions:

Who are the book's main characters?

How do these characters change during the book?

How does Robin Klein inform us of these changes?

What do you like about these characters?

To assist the groups in their deliberations, the teacher distributes blank retrieval charts for each group to complete.

Major characters	**Character traits and behaviour** at beginning	at end

Retrieval Chart

At the conclusion of the small group session, the teacher may like to bring the class together for a sharing session, drawing upon the findings from the small groups to explore the focus questions on character.

Exploring style

It is suggested that the focus question on style be explored in 'jigsaw' groups, that is groups each composed of children drawn from each of the groups formed for intensive reading of the selected novels. In each group, therefore, there may be one child who has read a *Penny Pollard* story, one who has read *Junk Castle,* one who has read *Boss of the Pool,* one *Hating Alison Ashley,* and one *Thing* and/or *Thingnapped.* In this way, each child has some particular expertise to contribute to the discussion. The groups could brainstorm ideas, with a recorder scribing the responses on a retrieval chart.

Exploring theme

Theme might be explored in the same or newly formed jigsaw groups, or through a teacher-led whole class discussion. The point here is to look beyond the plots of the stories to discover the underlying themes which seem to be central to more than one story. Skilful teacher questioning will be required to help children to make comparisons between stories. A retrieval chart may be used to record children's observations. Themes might include – friendship, and the importance of having a friend; conflict between people, and its resolution; finding your own inner strength; learning from experience; being able to see someone else's point of view; families, different kinds of family structures.

Bringing the study to a conclusion

A fitting conclusion to this author study could be the planning and compilation of a class book entitled *Robin Klein in Print* or *About Robin Klein.*

Information refined from the retrieval charts and other records from small group activities could be entered into this book. Together, class and teacher could negotiate other ideas for inclusion in the book, such as:

descriptions of characters
retellings of stories
book advertisements
crossword puzzles using the author's stories for clues
biographical facts about the author
opinions about the author
photos of class and group works
a couple of favourite poems by the author, illustrated by the children
a poll of the class favourite stories by the author
taped excerpts from the author's books (housed in the back of the book).

In addition, children could write to the author, either individually, in jigsaw groups, or as a class. In the latter case, it might be profitable to brainstorm questions to which the children would genuinely like answers from the author. If children anticipate a reply, they should include a stamped return envelope.

Obviously, most classes would not wish to include in a class book all the suggestions above. It is recommended that teacher and class be selective – there is no value in 'overkill'!

How will this author study fit into a classroom language program?

This author study will constitute only part of your week's program, that part which may be called your literature strand, because you will want to continue existing strategies such as USSR, writing on self-selected topics, as well as reading, writing and talking arising from the other curriculum areas.

If you plan for a two hour language block per day, you might choose to allocate one of the hours per day. Alternatively, you might allocate two or three blocks of the five to literature. Either way, this program requires approximately one hour per day. A possible timetable for that hour is as follows:

15 mins: Focus: Teacher-directed input with whole class. This time will include teacher serial reading, demonstrations, instructions or class discussions.

35 mins: Group reading, activities and contract time. Children work in groups, pairs or individually. Teacher works with groups or conducts conferences with individuals or readers' circle.

10 mins: Sharing: Class come together again to share finished work, newly discovered information or ideas.

Bibliography – Robin Klein

Boss of the Pool, Omnibus.

The Enemies, Angus & Robertson.

The Giraffe in Pepperell Street, Hodder & Stoughton.

Hating Alison Ashley, Viking Kestrel and Puffin.

Junk Castle, Oxford University Press.

Oodoolay, Era.

Penny Pollard's Diary, Oxford University Press.

Penny Pollard's Letters, Oxford University Press.

Penny Pollard in Print, Oxford University Press.

The Princess Who Hated It, Omnibus.

Ratbags and Rascals, Dent.

Separate Places, Kangaroo Press.

Snakes and Ladders, Dent.

Thalia the Failure, Ashton Scholastic.

Thing, Oxford University Press.

Thingnapped, Oxford University Press.

Aboriginal Stories . . .
. . . Reliving the Experience

Fran Murray

in consultation with Gerarda Tipiloura, Maggie Kerinaiua, Francine Tungutalum, Monica Tungutalum, Teresita Puruntatameri.

All ideas and conclusions reached in this article owe their existence to the magic evoked by the following storytellers who are Tiwi people from Nguiu (Bathurst Island), Northern Territory:

Gerardine Tungutalum
Sarah Kerinaiua
Dorothea Munkara
Dorothy and Martin Tipungwuti
Raphael Apuatimi.

Living stories

Aboriginal stories, legends and myths belong to a world of reality where people are interacting socially and emotionally in the course of their daily lives. This is in contrast to the impression we may glean from written anthologies that the stories belong to the cultural past. Living with stories is an integral part of life today for people of Aboriginal cultures. Stories, new and old are created and re-created in Aboriginal communities every day. Some will fade in the memories of a few, but many will be told a hundred years from now, having evolved and developed through the distinctive characteristics of oral traditions.

Unlike many potential storytelling situations in classrooms, Aboriginal stories are told in a socially and physically meaningful context. By way of explanation, take the following example:

> *The sun seeps towards the indistinguishable line separating sky from sea as the turtle eggs bob around in the pot of boiling seawater like trapped ping pong balls in a lotto draw. The flames of the small fire, nestled in the sand, threaten to go out, between the life-giving puffs of dry season wind.*
>
> *Mud crabs spit and sizzle their way from grey to pink on the hot charcoal while a group of people settle themselves in the shade of a Casuarina tree. A balmy breeze with a promise of coolness, rustles through the leaf litter dotted with the remains of egg shells as people lounge about chatting.*
>
> *Tepid ocean water has left skins dry and salty. Feelings of contentment and relaxation descend upon the group, with the distinctive aftertaste of bush tucker providing a reminder of the spoils of the day, as weary limbs are rested.*

'Tell us a story, Auntie' requests a younger woman of her relation. The request is as predictable as many of the stories which follow. As the story unravels, members of the audience react in various ways – some choose to listen passively, acting almost as if they were not a part of the group at all; others listen actively, contributing to the story-line, repeating parts of the story for effect to reinforce the humour, the grief, the astonishment etc. In fact, repetition appears to be intrinsic to the enjoyment of the story. The parts of the story with most audience appeal are repeated as many as three or four times within the story. The familiarity of the stories enhances audience participation and encourages group interaction.

Once the stories are finished being told by the main storyteller, smaller groups of two to four people may go on to relive favourite parts of the stories, recapturing and experiencing the emotions – the humour, the fear, the distress, the sense of the ridiculous.

Not everyone chooses or is chosen to tell stories. The most popular storytellers are dramatists. Listeners are entertained not just by the story itself but also by the way the story is recreated in their minds, by the storyteller's use of language and actions.

The oral tradition allows for a flexibility which does not threaten the values implicit in the stories. The most powerful essence of the oral mode, which is probably directly related to the survival of stories and beliefs over hundreds of years, is that there is no one correct way of telling or listening to stories. However, there are identifiable characteristics all of which may happen in a variety of ways. The picture painted above is but one of many.

So what happens in the storytelling situations which can be re-created in the classroom?

As much as we might like to, it is not the turtle eggs and mud crabs or the warm security of a bush shelter on a freezing night, nor the pleasure of sitting on a verandah while torrential rain thunders on the tin roof overhead, which we can re-create in the classroom.

What can be re-created is the *essence,* the way the storyteller and the listeners interact with each other in relation to the content of the story. It is the *emotional context* which the teacher must orchestrate. Aboriginal stories have social meaning and direct teaching implications for the group of people to which they belong. The challenge of the classroom teacher who is either physically and/or emotionally distant from the context of the story, is to re-create a 'world' into which the story fits, in order to allow children from a different cultural group access to the true meanings and social realities of the stories. The stories, as integral parts of living cultures, demand the same respect in a Western classroom situation as that which is naturally theirs in the oral tradition of Aboriginal culture. The degree to which this can happen depends upon the ability of the teacher to acquire knowledge about, and to re-create the context of the story for the children.

If we look at an Aboriginal storytelling situation, we can identify characteristics ...

- ***The stories are familiar to at least some of the audience***

In the classroom, teachers can frequently present stories to children before they are dealt with more formally. This can be done through regular storytelling and reading sessions, together with discussion of the concepts and ideas in the stories.

- ***The audience is exposed to the same stories over and over until members of the audience begin to own the stories.***

In the classroom after many retellings and discussion, it will be more likely that the children will internalise the story. It is not until this has occurred that the children will be able to empathise with the characters, the content and the messages in the story.

- ***When stories have been internalised by the audience in an Aboriginal context, the storyteller's role is supplemented by members of the audience because the story belongs to the group, not just the storyteller.***

Although many Aboriginal stories are now available in written texts, their original form and use was dictated by an oral tradition. As stories are told and retold across society and down the generations they remain dynamic. In the oral form, stories characteristically change and develop according to the needs of the community and, at times, the inclinations of the storytellers, as well as the particular audience.

In the classroom, the students can begin to take an active part as the story is retold. The teacher can encourage skills of prediction and interpretation, as children contribute to the storytelling session by taking part in oral cloze, discussion, or role-play activities.

- ***The storyteller appears to function as the person who guides the direction and pace of the stories, but does not maintain total control over them.***

Beginning with the first experience of the story, the teacher can create a cooperative, sharing environment, involving the children in discussing the possible outcomes and meanings in the story line. The teacher's aim is to *share* the story, which implies that the children must take bits of the story, and identify with them.

- ***Sometimes there may be more than one main storyteller delivering the same story.***

As a teacher, guiding the children into a situation of empathy with another culture, you must allow the children to take over the role of storyteller, as it is only through personal meaningful experiences that the children will achieve this. The students can decide the ways in which they will re-live the story – through drama, craft, oral presentations, writing etc.

- ***The Aboriginal situation is not threatening — people may choose to be a part of the group or they may choose not to be; listening can be either active or passive.***

This statement implies a degree of freedom which may not be present in most classrooms for practical reasons. However, once the children have had the initial stimulus afforded by the story the teacher can create an environment in which children can negotiate the particular way in which they would like to respond to the story. The teacher, like the Aboriginal storyteller is seen as a facilitator and resource person.

- ***The storyteller and audience interact naturally in direct response to the relationships shared within the group.***

All classrooms work on a system of relationships. The teacher has the main role in determining classroom relationships.

Selecting stories

Selecting appropriate stories from an Aboriginal context often involves a degree of sensitivity on the part of the teacher.

Some stories which belong to a certain group of people may not be well received or appropriate to a group of people belonging to another Aboriginal cultural group. If you have Aboriginal children in your class, this may be an aspect to be aware of.

It is also necessary to be aware that any particular story may be one person's or group's version which has been handed down over many years. To an audience used to a different version, this may need explanation in the classroom context.

Similarly, creation stories which explain the existence of natural phenomena represent the belief system of a specific cultural group and may not be acceptable to another Aboriginal group if presented under a blanket statement such as 'We are going to explore ideas and beliefs by Aboriginal people about how the world was created'. Creation stories, like other stories, are peculiar to particular groups of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal culture across Australia is diverse as is evidenced by the large number of distinct languages which represent meaning systems relevant to the particular ecosystem and social organisation of a given group.

In selecting stories for classroom use, the general criteria for 'good' written stories can often apply, especially when the stories have been rewritten by people with a Western cultural viewpoint. Teachers may also have access to other stories which do not fit traditional 'school' criteria for acceptable written stories.

As Aboriginal people are beginning to choose to express themselves in their own language in written form, stories are becoming available in Aboriginal languages (with English translations) and in Aboriginal English. In the Northern parts of Australia, many of these stories are available from Aboriginal schools where bilingual programs operate. While writing conventions and the style of these stories may not fit easily with what has been seen traditionally to be acceptable 'school' English, such stories represent a part of the richness of the Aboriginal storytelling way of life.

Where teachers can utilise these stories in their classrooms, non-Aboriginal children will gain an insight into Aboriginal life to which they may not otherwise have access.

It is important to remember that the stories belong to the society from which they come and without some knowledge and understanding of that society, the stories lose their real meaning. Every attempt needs to be made to contact the authors of the stories, or the people in the area from which the stories have come, in order to develop an understanding of the context of the story, of its purpose and use in everyday life. Teachers, together with students can achieve this by writing to Aboriginal organisations, community groups or Aboriginal Councils where they exist.

Making stories come alive

Ideas grow and develop as children are involved in a variety of real life experiences. The following format presents some ideas for dealing with literature, such as Aboriginal stories, around which a context must be created. Teachers can use these

activities in a creative way with children of all ages. However, they should be wary of doing 'too much' with a story. In the examples provided below the activities listed are not in any special order. Selection should be based on appropriateness for a particular student group.

Children need to encounter the experience and create the environment

This can be done in the classroom following the use of stories as the stimulus by activities such as:

Constructing and creating (things imaginary and real)
Receiving visitors
Observing
Visiting people and places
Watching films
Listening
Researching
Conducting surveys
Listening to stories
Writing letters
Sharing books
Telling stories
Encountering and re-enacting drama

An example using the story entitled ***The Bat and the Rainbow*** (*Djugurba Tales from the Spirit Time*). This story was told by a Tiwi woman from Nguiu (Bathurst Island) in the Northern Territory.

- Tell the story to the children evoking a sense of drama and mystery by the manner in which you relate the story.
- Create a rainbow in your room. Talk with the children about what they already know about rainbows before you introduce the story.
- Read the story to the children.
- On the second reading or telling of the story, have the children role-play small segments of the story.
- Ask members of an Aboriginal community near you to come and tell some legend stories to the children.
- With older children, begin a study of the home area of the author, in this case, Bathurst Island, Northern Territory.
- Create a wall map of the area to set the scene.
- Research, study and create the traditional seasonal calendar of the Tiwi people.

Children need to develop their ideas about, and to conceptualise the context of the story

Ideas continue to grow and develop as children become actively involved in talking about their real life experiences by, for example:

Describing (sequence, process, cause, effect)
Debating issues
Discussing topics
Interviewing

Retelling (stories, visits, observations)
Sharing books (predicting, inferring, interpreting, negotiating
Staging (enacting drama, role-play)

The following suggestions for developing ideas through verbal interaction relate to ***The Bat and the Rainbow.***

- Discuss the story with the children.
- Make contact with an Aboriginal community or person – write letters requesting a school visit, seeking information. In this case, it could be the author of the story.
- Set up a letter exchange with an Aboriginal community school.
- Investigate the lifestyle of the Tiwi people of the Northern Territory, where the story originates.
- Investigate the concept of rainbows from a western scientific viewpoint.
- Research some other stories about the rainbow serpent, which belong to other Aboriginal groups.
- Introduce storytelling sessions every day, where children and teacher contribute.
- Research the use of stone tools and implements by Aboriginal people.
- Rewrite the text in big book form as a negotiated story (children and teacher work on recalling the story-line and make decisions about how to write it down together).
- Have the children illustrate the negotiated text.
- Role-play the story many times.
- Introduce alternatives into the role-play e.g. what if the rainbow serpent had not been killed?
- Construct puppets and create the story as a puppet play.
- Using this story as a model, teacher and the children write a legend together, the content and form of which is negotiated between the teacher and children.
- Create a wall frieze depicting the sequence of the story.
- With older children discuss the lesson being taught through the medium of the legend.
- Discuss the information on the Tiwi seasonal calendar and its implications for the lifestyle the Tiwi people may lead.

Children need to define and clarify the context of the story within their own world of meaning.

Ideas are further developed and clarified as children record their real life experiences in written or oral form.

Sharing books (child made, teacher made, commercial.)
Writing texts (literary, functional, reportive, expository)
Making charts, maps, story webs
Producing films/tapes
Keeping a journal

The suggestions outlined below relate to ***The Bat and The Rainbow.***

- Share the class books.

- Children can write their own legends, working through drafts and conferencing with the teacher and other children as they write.
- In small groups re-write the story for 'readers theatre' or other dramatic presentation.
- Write invitations, signs and posters, informing other classes of the plays to be presented.
- Make a story map of *The Bat and The Rainbow.*
- Write the text to match the wall frieze depicting the sequence of the story.
- Write a booklet entitled 'How to make and use stone implements'.
- Write a scientific report about rainbows.
- Video the puppet plays.

Resources

The following list of resources has been compiled bearing in mind the fact that it is impossible to list here many of the Aboriginal stories which have been written. It is hoped that the resources listed here will help teachers to tap the richness of the world of Aboriginal stories.

Annotated Bibliographies

Barlow, Alex and Hill, Marji. (1978) *Black Australia* Book I and (1985) *Black Australia,* Book II. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra. Both books detail a large range of print resource materials relevant to the study of Aboriginal peoples.

Barlow, Alex. (1986) *Aboriginal Studies Resource List,* Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra. This book lists in categories, books and films readily available to schools.

Copell, W.G. (1978) *Audio – Visual Resource Materials Relating to the Aboriginal Australians.* Curriculum Development Centre, Canberra. This is a companion book to *Black Australia* and is extremely valuable to teachers as it gives details and a short explanation of each cassette, map, chart and film/video listed.

Copell, W.G. (1983) *Audio – Visual Resource Materials About Aboriginal Australians.* NSW Department of Education. This book contains a comprehensive list of films, kits, pictures and charts, recordings, slides and filmstrips with details and explanations for each.

A selection of traditional Aboriginal stories retold as written texts

Maralngura, N. etal. *Djugurba Tales from the Spirit Time,* A.N.U. Press.
Timaepatua, M. *Kwork Kwork the Green Frog and other Tales from the Spirit Time,* A.N.U. Press.
Gordon, Tulo. *Milbi Aboriginal Tales from Queensland's Endeavour River,* A.N.U. Press.
Gulpilil, *Stories of the Dreamtime,* Collins.

Gulpilil, *The Birirrk, Our Ancestors of the Dreaming,* L & S Publishing.
Roughsey, Dick. *The Rainbow Serpent,** Collins/Picture Lions.
Trezise, Percy; Roughsey, Dick. *The Quinkins,** Collins/Picture Lions.
Trezise, Percy; Roughsey, Dick. *Banana Bird and the Snake Men,* Collins/Picture Lions.
Trezise, Percy; Roughsey, Dick. *Turramulli the Giant Quinkin,* Collins/Picture Lions.
Trezise, Percy; Roughsey, Dick. *The Magic Firesticks,* Collins/Picture Lions.
Trezise, Percy; Roughsey, Dick. *Gidja,* Collins/Picture Lions.
Trezise, Percy; Roughsey, Dick (1985) *The Flying Fox Warriors,* Collins.
Trezise, Percy (1986) *Ngalculli,* Collins.
Trezise, Percy (1987) *The Owl People,* Collins.
Trezise, Percy (1987) *The Peopling of Australia,* Collins.
* available on filmstrip and as motion pictures from Weston Woods (047) 58 7358.

Picture books series

This series of picture books has been compiled by Pamela Lofts and published by Ashton Scholastic:

The Echidna and the Shade Tree, told by Mona Green.

Dunbi the Owl, told by Daisy Utemorrah.

How the Birds Got Their Colours, told by Mary Albert.

When the Snake Bites the Sun, told by David Mowaljarlai.

Warnayarra – the Rainbow Snake, told by the Senior Boys Class Lajamanu School.

How the Kangaroos got their Tails, told by George Mung Mung Lirrmiyarri.

The Bat and the Crocodile, told by Jacko Dolumyu and Hector Sandaloo.

The Kangaroo and the Porpoise, told by Agnes Lippo.

Other books

Barlow, Alex and Hill, Marji. (1987) *Heroes of the Aboriginal Struggle* and *The Craft of the Stone: Aboriginal Technology,* Macmillan. These books are suitable for primary school children.

Bernt, Catherine. (1979) *Land of the Rainbow Snake,* Collins.

Holder, Robyn. (1986) *Aborigines of Australia.* Wayland. Written in simple style and easily accessible to children, this book traces the history of the Aboriginal people from what is known before contact to the present day.

Walker, Kath (Oodgeroo Noonunga). (1972) *Stradbroke Dreamtime,* Angus & Robertson.

Walker, Kath. *Father Sky Mother Earth,* Jacaranda Wiley.
Wiley.

Film available from Film Australia

Storymakers: Percy Trezise, Dick Roughsey – A Journey to Quinkin Country.

Tuning in to the Spirit of Place

Lyn Linning

Australian children's literature is rich in books which both describe the natural environment and explore people's relationship to it. This wealth of poems, picture books and stories provides adequate resources to suit the reading abilities of children throughout the primary school; to illuminate many landscapes, seascapes and environmental themes and to promote enjoyable, successful wide reading. The cumulative effects of a well-planned program which includes such literature can be profound: a greater insight into the results of human contact and an urge to foster harmony between human concerns and the continuing life and growth of the country.

For the class

Some poems and picture books shared with a whole class can enrich independent reading, sharpen the focus of a unit of work and give students collectively a sense of progress. Booktalks by teachers and librarians generate the knowledge and enthusiasm students need to select works they can read and enjoy. Ten minute discussions to acknowledge the children's reading achievements and display their written or multimedia responses make excellent introductions or conclusions to periods of sustained silent reading. The plan for the unit of work, showing where various books and activities fit, should be displayed in a form students can understand (a two or three tier web format is ideal).

For small groups

The aim is to develop responses through peer group sharing (as free from hovering teachers as possible). The group process is as important as any finished product such as a tape, live dramatisation, display or model. Use of two patterns is suggested.

- all read the whole or a part of the same book
- all read a different story or poem suitable for comparison, contrast or complementary approach to a topic. Design work cards that include simple, open activities such as reading aloud passages they like, discussing settings, identifying the links between their book and the unit's topic, and relating the book to parts of Australia they know.

For the individual

Once a topic and range of resources have been selected, children should have some choice in their books, their mode of response, their pace and their working partners. It

is often advisable to list novels in order of difficulty (see below). Prepare cards with individual response options set out clearly. Gwen Gawith (1983) has excellent suggestions, with copyright free, graphic worksheets, in *Library Alive! Promoting Reading and Research in the School Library,* Longman Paul (pp. 11-29).

Advantages of a wide-reading approach

As a unit gathers momentum, the children's oral, written and pictorial responses take over from displays and booktalks as the main contribution to a stimulating literary atmosphere. The examples below indicate that finding appropriate resources on topics relating to the Australian natural environment presents no problem. The sources of poems are indicated by the title of an anthology. All anthologies are detailed at the end of this section. Resources have been selected and suggestions made for strategies on three topics to exemplify these general guidelines. Teachers can choose material at an appropriate level from these lists.

Exploring the beach and the sea

(Other groupings of resources highlighting The Bush, The Outback, Mountain Life etc. might be selected and treated in a similar way.)

Poems

'First on the Beach' by Geoffrey Dutton *(Apples from Hurricane Street)*
'Beach in Summer' by Katherine Blowen *(7 to 10 and Back Again)*
'Fishing' by Katherine Blowen *(7 to 10 and Back Again)*
'Surfboard Steed' by Annette Kosseris *(7 to 10 and Back Again)*
'Moods of the Sea' by Dora Friendship *(7 to 10 and Back Again)*
'Lifesaver' by Elizabeth Riddell *(The Four Corners)*

The poems express the joys of recreation at the beach through visual imagery which would inspire illustration. Let children draw, paint or create a collage while taped seaside sound effects dominate the room. Ask for photographs. These can be grouped around appropriate quotations from the poems and made into posters. In guiding the discussions, try to come back to the theme of the beach environment: how Australians have transformed it and how they interact with it.

Lifesaver is a grim reminder that the sea is dangerous. Children could discuss, draw or write about other threatening aspects of the beach or sea. This could be a good introduction to the novels *Adrift* and *Seashores and Shadows.*

Picture books

Wild, Margaret and Tanner, Jane. *There's a Sea in my Bedroom,* Nelson.
Hathorn, Libby. *Lachlan's Walk,* Methuen.
Bedson, Jack and Gouldthorpe, Peter. *Don't Get Burnt! or the Great Australian Day at the Beach,* Collins.
Balderson, Margaret and Haldane, Roger. *Blue and Gold Day,* Angus & Robertson.
Greenwood, Ted. *Ship Rock,* Hutchinson. (A picture poem).

The picture books complement one another: *There's a Sea in my Bedroom* shows a child's change in attitude towards the sea from fear to enthusiasm through an imaginative experience; *Lachlan's Walk* depicts a small but venturesome child in danger on steep cliffs as he looks for a safe beach; *Don't Get Burnt!* vividly shows the pleasures and pitfalls of a day at a crowded beach and provides opportunities for discussing stereotypes (national and sex-role); *Blue and Gold Day* is a lyrical evocation of the fresh, unspoiled morning on a quiet beach.

Novels

Scholes, Katherine. *The Boy and the Whale,* Viking Kestrel.
Thiele, Colin; Ingpen, Robert. (Illus.) *Storm Boy,* Rigby.
Baillie, Allan. *Adrift,* Nelson.
Mattingley, Christobel. *The Jetty,* Hodder & Stoughton.
Thiele, Colin. *Seashores and Shadows,* Walter McVitty Books.
Norman, Lilith. *Dream of Seas,* Collins.
Scholes, Katherine. *The Landing,* Hill of Content.

All of the novels focus on a boy's or girl's relationship with the sea and sea creatures. This should be raised as a discussion point.

Geographical location is identified in all the novels. Pictures of these places could be collected and comparisons made of the nature of the environment and how people live there.

If children read different books from the list they can share their perceptions imaginatively focusing on these topics:

- **Moods of the sea.** Each book has descriptions of the sea. These can be read aloud, and children can share how the books' characters felt about the sea and how they themselves feel about the sea in that particular mood. Use the poem 'Moods of the Sea' to begin.
- **Sea Creatures.** Whales, pelicans, sharks, commercial fish, seals etc. could be discussed in the context of the novels in which they are found and from the students' own experiences. Children will see the spectrum of attitudes and relationships depicted in Australian stories from the boy's wish to save the whale (Scholes, 1985) through Storm Boy's friendship with three pelicans of distinctly different personalities (Thiele, 1974) to Seasie's mystical kinship with the seals (*Dream of Seas*).
- **Growing and changing with the sea.** All the main characters make a change in their lives because of their experiences. Children can discuss minor or major changes in the characters they have read about.

As a culmination children should be free to express their feelings and attitudes towards Australia's seashores. Art, poetry, movement to music, non-narrative and narrative writing are all legitimate options. Finally it might be good to return to the poems and to find and write others for a class anthology.

The challenge of the Australian environment

The list of books given here is select and, as there is an abundance of material available, it's possible to deal with narrower topics such as flood, fire, or pioneering.

Poems

'Bushland Flames' by Katherine Blowen *(7 to 10 and Back Again)*
'Drought' by Katherine Blowen *(7 to 10 and Back Again)*
'Song of the Fire' by J.K. Ewers *(One Hundred Poems Chosen For Children)*
'The Fire at Ross's Farm' by Henry Lawson *(Sing in Bright Colours)*
'My Country' by Dorothea Mackellar *(The Four Corners)*
'Bird in the Classroom' by Colin Thiele *(Sing in Bright Colours)*

The poem 'My Country' would be a good initial focus for this literature-based unit as all the harsh aspects of the Australian environment are vividly acknowledged in it.

Picture books (Nature of challenge indicated in brackets)

McLean, Andrew and Janet. *Jenny and the Night of the Storm,* Oxford University Press. (Storm)
Epstein, June. *When Tracey Came For Christmas,* Oxford University Press. (Cyclone)
Smith, Ivan and Pugh, Clifton. *The Death of a Wombat,* Wren. (Fire)
Boardman, Alan and Harvey, Roland. 'The Crossing of the Blue Mountains' in *Great Events in Australia's History,* Five Mile Press. (Difficult Terrain)
Boardman, Alan and Harvey, Roland. *Burke and Wills,* Five Mile Press. (Arid Land)

A simple discussion guide for groups of 3-6 (each child to bring a different picture book) could focus on what threat nature posed, who had to face it, how they coped, whether they survived, whether the events really occurred etc. Each child could choose a picture to show the danger at its peak and explain it. The Poem 'My Country' could be displayed on a chart, and searched for appropriate quotations after the picture books have been discussed.

Novels and stories: (Nature of challenge indicated in brackets)

Brinsmead, Hesba. 'Down Along to Sackville' in Wrightson, Patricia. (ed.). *Emu Stew,* Penguin. (Flood)
Hurle, Garry. 'The Gum Nut Reins' in *The Saddler's Grand-daughter,* Penguin. (Flood)
Schurmann, E.A. *Charlie Up a Gum Tree,* Hodder & Stoughton. (Magpies)
Shelley, Noreen. 'A Very Hot Day' in Wrightson, Patricia. (ed.). *Emu Stew,* Penguin. (Coping with heat)
Steele, Mary. *Arkwright,* Hyland House. (Ants)
Thiele, Colin. *February Dragon,* Rigby. (Fire)
Couper, Sue. *Pelican Point,* Hodder & Stoughton. (Self-sufficiency when camping) camping)
Norman, Lilith. *Climb a Lonely Hill,* Collins. (Survival in arid country)
Baillie, Alan. *Riverman,* Nelson. (Wild terrain in Tasmania: Franklin River)

Preston, James. *The Sky Between the Trees,* Queensland University Press. (Struggle to clear land and farm successfully)
Southall, Ivan. *Hill's End,* Angus & Robertson. (Flood)
Southall, Ivan. *Ash Road,* Angus & Robertson. (Fire)
Carr, Roger Vaughan. *Firestorm,* Nelson. (Fire)

Many of the books deal with human responsibility for 'natural catastrophes'; resourcefulness in the struggle to survive (or in the case of Burke and Wills, stupidity); and the ability of nature to regenerate after adversity or destruction. Teachers should prepare appropriate individual response and group discussion guides to focus on these themes. Some students could compare how the characters in their books act in flood, fire and bush survival with current guidelines for these situations. Books based on real events or in a real place could be compared with related non-fiction resources.

Such units should end with a sharp focus on characters and choices in relation to the environment. Dramatisations or tapes (with sound effects) which show a character acting decisively could be presented and discussed in class as a culminating activity.

Preserving the Australian environment

Through literature, children can extend their knowledge of and empathy with flora, fauna and historical sites worth preserving. Some poems and stories are valuable simply because they make the reader aware of the appeal and value of flora, fauna and relics of the past, while others have the theme of conservation at their centre. The topic could be narrowed to focus on trees, plants, animals, birds or land use. The brief annotations in brackets indicate how.

Poems

'The Tame and the Wild' by Dennis Hall *(Emu Stew).* (Contrasts farm and bush)
'The Man from Adaminaby' by Douglas Stewart *(The Four Corners).* (Town drowned for dam)
'Hole in the Forest' by Michael Dransfield *(Sing in Bright Colours),*
'They Have Cut Down the Pines' by Mary Lisle *(Sing in Bright Colours),* and
'The Axeman' by C.J. Dennis. *(Sing in Bright Colours).* (Destruction of forests)

All of the anthologies contain poems about native animals. These celebrate the range of living things in the environment. Make poem cards (one poem per card) to use in a poetry workshop where children select and present poems through movement, dance or mime, with music or sound effects, or as a television segment. Libby Hathorn outlines the procedure in more detail in a previous PETA publication *Word Magic: Poetry as a Shared Adventure,* edited by Walter McVitty, pp. 51-56.

Picture books

Niland, Deborah. *The Drover's Dream,* Collins.
Hathorn, Libby. *Stephen's Tree,* Methuen.
Burt, Denise and Bartram, Haworth. *The Smallest Swallow,* Childerset.
Greenwood, Ted. *Everlasting Circle,* Hutchinson.

While enjoying these and other picture books showing flora and fauna and allowing spontaneous response, children might consider questions such as:

What threatens the existence of our national forests?
How can koalas be observed, enjoyed and kept safe?
Is the kangaroo ever a threat to human beings? If so what should be done?

Novels and stories (Flora, fauna or issue involved is indicated in brackets)

Brinsmead, Hesba. *The Honey Forest,* Hodder & Stoughton.
(Rainforest, Aboriginal handprints)
Mattingley, Christobel. *Lizard Log,* Hodder & Stoughton.
(Observing without harming)
Thiele, Colin. *The Magpie Island,* Rigby.
(Limitations of human power to help wildlife)
Thiele, Colin. *Pinquo,* Rigby. (Penguins)
Croser, Josephine. *Brella: the Story of a Young Fruit Bat,* Nelson
Bernard-Waite, Judy. *The Riddle of the Trumpelar,* Ashton-Scholastic.
Mattingley, Christobel. *The Battle of the Galah Trees,* Brockhampton.
(Conservation in the city)
McCormack, Rob. *Strange Intruder,* Ashton Scholastic. (Thylacine)
Phipson, Joan. *No Escape,* Macmillan. (Trapping birds)
Phipson, Joan. *The Bird Smugglers,* Methuen. (Illegal export of native birds)
Wrightson, Patricia. *An Older Kind of Magic,* Hutchinson.
(Conservation vs. development in the city)
Mitchell, Elyne. *The Silver Brumby,* Hutchinson.
(Exploitation of horses, pollution of Victorian Alps)
Dugan, Michael. *Dingo Boy,* Penguin.
(Dingoes as threat to farm animals)
Small, Mary. *Night of the Muttonbirds,* Methuen.
(Muttonbirds: source of income and species worth preserving)
Scholes, Katherine. *The Landing*, Hill of Content.
(Caring for wildlife, especially sea birds)

All of the novels and stories explore the environment; what we can learn from it and our responsibilities towards it. Current events and continuing ecological debates make newspapers and magazines good sources of related material. Encourage students to identify what they value in their own environment, plan for its survival or development and compare their ideas with their peer group's, teacher's, parent's, National Trust's etc. This could be a good transition point to Aboriginal studies, since the original Australians achieved harmony with their natural environment.

Evaluation

If students have read widely and with enjoyment, developed oral and written communication skills, and perceived some of the enduring themes of literature, the language arts objectives have been achieved. It is difficult to measure the affective objectives, since ultimately success depends on the lifelong attitudes of your students towards their land. Teachers can only map some expeditions through the rich lands of Australian literature in the faith that each person's encounters there will gain the insight of Patricia Wrightson's character, Eustace, who 'knew that this old country would fashion its people, all of them, to its own shape in its own good time; and this slow growth of the country was the best hope of them all'. (*Rocks of Honey*, Puffin, p. 175)

Anthologies

Gilmore, Mary and Pender, Lydia. *Poems to Read to Young Australians,* Books for Pleasure.

Heylen, Jill and Jellet, Celia. (comps.). *Someone is Flying Balloons: Australian Poems for Children,* Omnibus Books.

Heylen, Jill and Jellet, Celia. (comps.). *Rattling in the Wind: Australian Poems for Children,* Omnibus Books.

Kosseris, Annette. et al. *Seven to Ten and Back Again: New Verse for Children,* Currawong Press.

Mappin, A.R. (comp.). *Sing in Bright Colours,* Perth's Westbooks.

Saxby, Joyce. *One Hundred Poems Chosen for Children,* Angus & Robertson.

Scott-Mitchell, Clare. (comp.). *Apples from Hurricane Street: Poems for Children,* Methuen.

Thompson, A.K. (ed.). *The Four Corners: an Anthology of Poetry,* Jacaranda Press.

Wrightson, Patricia, (ed.). *Ernie Stew: an Illustrated Collection of Stories and Poems for Children,* Penguin.

Death of the Spaghetti Dance

Mary Mathias
Janet Oxwell

As classroom educators we have struggled with 'multiculturalism' for many years. The swelling of our classrooms with migrant and refugee children, of an ever increasing variety of ethnic backgrounds, brought the realisation that we possessed both the potential, and desire, to be agents of change and development in this area.

Many of us initially became bogged down in the 'Spaghetti — Dance' routine. In our enthusiasm we thought that if we studied a country each term (usually chosen on the basis of the most predominant nationalities in our school), cooked some of their food, and prepared a dance for assembly, we had written a multicultural strand into our curriculum. Gradually we realised we were only dealing with externals, and not changing attitudes and understandings.

We have since found that the meeting of cultures can be comfortably and effectively approached through a literature based language program, which takes into account varying ability levels and ethnic backgrounds. The program described below is one we designed for a mainstream upper primary or early high school class.

Print–flood stage

Aim: to expose the children to a broad and varied diet of Australian literature with a multi-ethnic flavour.

The selection of literature should cater for the different ability and interest levels within the class and provide a range of literary models.

Suggested strategies

A Literature Display Begin by setting up an attractive display of all the material you have gathered together. It should not only contain narrative. Look for picture books, expository text, poetry, plays, myths and legends etc. Don't ignore kits either. Speak to your ESL teacher. You will find he or she is a wonderful source of multicultural materials. Check local libraries, as well as area Education and Resource Centres. Where possible provide materials in the languages of your ESL children.

Daily Shared Book The material in the Literature Display needs to be 'sold' to the children. Put aside five to ten minutes per day to introduce them to a piece of literature. It may be the first chapter of a novel, a poem, a card on a particular country out of one of the kits, or a look through a picture book.

USSR Have lots of Australian titles available and encourage the children to read Australian literature during USSR. It is important that you provide materials in a variety of ability levels, as well as languages, if you have ESL children.

Class Poetry Reading Select poems that are traditional Australian and contemporary Australian (including poems by migrant Australians) as well as poems written by children. The booklet *Ethnic Voices* in SEMP Kit, No 3, Australia: A Multicultural Society, Race and Ethnic Relations (Curriculum Development Centre) contains some excellent poetry written by migrant children as well as the children of migrants.

Daily Group Reading Divide the class into four mixed ability groups – ensure the ESL children and those with delayed reading skills are placed with orally fluent readers. Allocate these groups multiple copies of four different novels for a daily 10-20 minute reading session. The more fluent readers take turns to read aloud while the others follow. This provides a model for the weaker readers and ESL children, who might also like to take part in the reading aloud as they gain confidence. If you have parents coming into the classroom to help with reading, they could be asked to lead groups. At our school all mothers and fathers who help with reading in the classroom are given a day training session. We have also used taped stories to provide a model of pronunciation, pace and expression. If you advertise you will find parents who are unable to help at school, but are willing to read books onto tapes at home.

Provide time at the end of these daily sessions, for the group to comment on and discuss their book. This need not be teacher dominated. It is vital of course that you know the books well and check that each group is understanding the development of their story-line, particularly the ESL children. Suggested titles include:

Group 1 – Wheatley, Nadia. *Five Times Dizzy,* Oxford University Press.
Group 2 – Martin, David. *The Chinese Boy,* Macmillan.
Group 3 – Baillie, Allan. *Little Brother,* Nelson.
Group 4 – Spence, Eleanor. *The Seventh Pebble,* Oxford University Press.

We chose these books because they cover a variety of multicultural experiences. *The Chinese Boy* gives an historical perspective. *The Seventh Pebble* looks at religious conflict in a small country town. *Little Brother* reminds the children that many newcomers are survivors of war, and *Five Times Dizzy* looks afresh at an ethnic group we have perhaps come to take for granted. These books do not stereotype characters and they all have realistic plots involving children who are believable.

The Class Book This is read to the class daily by the teacher, e.g. Wheatley, Nadia. *Dancing in the Anzac Deli,* Oxford University Press. We chose this book because it is a sequel to *Five Times Dizzy* and the plot lends itself to serial reading. As well as having a multicultural flavour, it has an element of mystery.

Focus stage

Aim: to provide the children with the opportunity to look more closely at their group reading book in order to share its story-line and message with the class.
It is hoped that the sharing and discussion will lead children to a broader appreciation of diversity in the books they read and in their own society.

Suggested strategies

Group presentations On completion of their group reading activity the children must decide on a means of presenting their book to the remainder of the class. It is important that they understand that whatever technique they choose, it must clearly portray the story-line. If parents have assisted with the book reading they may like to stay on to help with this activity also. These presentations may include abridged plays, taped synopsis accompanied by a series of murals, a large picture book with a spoken synopsis, soliloquy by the main character of the book etc. At the end of each presentation it is important to allow time for questions and discussion, to ensure that the whole class has grasped the story-line. The books should then also be available for other class members to read in their own time. The material in your literature display will also hopefully provide background information. For instance if you use *Little Brother* it would be important to provide expository text on Kampuchea along with any traditional stories, poems etc, from that culture.

Formal class discussion When all of the presentations have been made and all of the books have been distributed among the class for personal reading, it is important to allow time for guided discussion revolving around carefully chosen focus questions e.g.

What strengths did the main characters in these novels show?
Were there any problems common to the characters in all these books?
Was there any one thing that helped the characters?
What are the advantages of coming from a dual or multicultural background?
What sometimes gets in the way of friendship between people from different backgrounds?
Do people have to change to fit into a new society?

We discovered in the reading of these books that feelings of loneliness and confusion were common to most characters and that friendship often solved many of the problems.

Class Book Another book could be chosen specifically to help the children clarify one of the focus questions they have been discussing, e.g. Mattingley, Christobel, *New Patches for Old,* Hodder & Stoughton. This tells of an English girl's struggle to settle in Australia. *The Two Worlds of Jimmie Barker* as told to Janet Mathews, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, illustrates the dilemma of a tribal Aboriginal in white ruled society between 1900 and 1970 and provides a basis for comparison of the Aboriginal and the migrant experience.

Employment stage

Aim: to develop and broaden the concepts and understandings that the children have begun to acquire during their experiences with literature.

We believe that it is important to try and provide situations that will attempt to simulate experiences and feelings that these book characters, and many migrants and refugees face.

Some suggested activities

- Invite people to come and tell stories in the language of some of your ESL children. Ask the English speaking children to try and work out a storyline. When they have attempted this, ask the guest or one of your ESL children to retell the story in English.
- During one lesson distribute books in another language e.g. Wilson, Lorraine. *City Kids,* Nelson (available in Italian and Greek). Have the children attempt to work out the meaning of the story.
- Visit a shop where the proprietor's native tongue is not English. Arrange for him or her not to speak anything other than their first language. Give the children a list of items to purchase.
- Have someone give a mathematics lesson to your class in the first language of one or some of the ESL children in your class. This should involve the introduction of some new information.
- Collect canned and packaged foods in non-English languages. Have the children work out what they are in order to prepare a meal which they will share.

  Note: It is important with these types of activities to allow time to discuss how the children felt and if these feelings were similar to those experienced by characters in the books. It is also important that they relate these book characters to real life. The ESL children and guests can help them to do this.
- Develop your own timeline of immigration to Australia. This will help the children realise we are a nation of migrants other than our Aboriginal people.
- Have all of the children record stories as told by older members of the family. ESL children may write these in their own language for later translation and publication in both languages in a class storybook.

Whilst we have set the process out in stages it does not have to occur in this order. Some of the *Employment stage* activities could be introduced quite early to increase awareness and understanding.

The process, with its suggested strategies and organisation is meant to be neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. It is our hope that teachers will become avid, critical, researchers of literature which deals with the meeting of cultures in Australia. Of course there is still a need to cook spaghetti and prepare a dance for assembly, but this is now hopefully only one small facet of our multi-ethnic Australian studies.

Resources

Narrative

Brooksbank, Anne. *On Loan,* Winners.
Clark, Mavis Thorpe. *A Stranger Came to the Mine,* Astons.
Dalgleish, Joan. *Dim and Dusty,* Hodder & Stoughton.
Dalgleish, Joan. *The Latch-Key Dog,* Hodder & Stoughton.
Donkin, Nance. *A Friend for Petros,* Nelson.
Donkin, Nance. *The Maidens of Pefka,* Methuen.
Donkin, Nance. *Nini,* Rigby.

Fatchen, Max. *The Spirit Wind,* Methuen.
French, Simon. *Hey Phantom Singlet,* Angus & Robertson.
Hathorn, Elizabeth. *Paolo's Secret,* Methuen.
Marrone, Carolyn. *Mr In Between,* Kangaroo Press.
Martin, David. *The Chinese Boy,* Globe.
Martin, David. *Hughie,* Globe.
Martin, David. *The Man in the Red Turban,* Puffin.
Mattingley, Christobel. *The Angel with a Mouth Organ,* Hodder & Stoughton.
Mattingley, Christobel. *New Patches For Old,* Puffin.
Paice, Margaret. *Dolan's Roost,* Collins.
Spence, Eleanor. *The Seventh Pebble,* Oxford.
Thiele, Colin. *The Fire in the Stone,* Puffin.
Thiele, Colin. *The Shadow on the Hills,* Rigby.
Thiele Colin. *The Valley Between,* Rigby.

Teacher reference books

Aird, Elizabeth and Lippman, Davina. (1983) *English is Their Right,* A E Press.

Australian Institute Multicultural Affairs (1985) *Australia's People,* The Craftsman Press Pty Ltd.

Dugan, Michael and Szwarc, Josef. (1984) *There Goes the Neighbourhood,* Macmillan.

Elliott, Marietta. (1985) *Students Can Write in Their Second Language,* Hodja Educational Resources Co-op Ltd.

Foster, Vie. (1986) *We are . . . Australians,* ACT Schools Authority.

Gael, J; Glover, G; Henriksen, P, with the assistance of Gigler, B. (1983) *Changes. Developing Multicultural Aspects in the Primary School,* Hodja Educational Resources Co-op Ltd.

Jonston, Susan. (1980) *We Came to Australia,* Methuen.

O'Sullivan, Colleen. (1982) *Literature for a Multicultural Society,* Catholic Education Office, Sydney.

Stanelis, Nancye K. (1978) *Resources for Schools Multicultural Education,* Education Department of South Australia.

Rural Australia – Urban Australia

Joan Zahnleiter

Australian children's literature offers much to enrich children's knowledge of their own country and its people as well as giving them insights into the kinds of people they themselves can or would like to be. Parker (1969 p.5) states that 'Children know the fullness of their world when they apprehend it in both factual and artistic ways.' Thus the fiction complements and extends the factual, providing another dimension of knowing. The importance of this 'unique way of knowing' (Parker, 1969 pp.1-14) is also emphasised by Bassett (1974 p.7) who discusses it as 'existential knowledge, complementary to conceptual and experiential knowledge (and) important in its own right . . . a distinction critical for . . . teachers who have to assist the development of children.'

Consequently, teachers need to exploit the rich variety of children's literature in order to foster well rounded social development in children as they enjoy and profit from all the ways of knowing their world.

This topic seeks, through literature, to provide vicarious experiences of both country and city life so that children may come to understand that, while the surface features may differ, the similarities are more fundamental to the human condition. For example, even though there are difficulties in adapting to either setting, the need to belong, the need for self esteem, and the need for privacy and for play space are universal. Children's literature will help them to know how others feel and why they themselves feel as they do, while presenting them with lively impressions of life in the city or the country – the sights, sounds and smells and most of all, the people.

Stories and poems are put together in groups to focus on particular points. These can be modified to suit particular age groups and settings. Books with related content are indicated. Some titles are listed more than once simply because they have more than one application to the themes and topics under discussion. This makes them useful additions to any school library. It is suggested however, that caution be exercised in not 'squeezing the orange till the pips squeak'. Working one book over exhaustively may kill all interest in it.

Theme: The need to belong

Topic A: Moving home

The feeling of alienation is strong when so many adaptations have to be made at once. The following points could be raised in discussion of the books listed below,

when all members of the group have read one or two titles. Encourage children to relate the experiences of the book characters to their own.

- *Coping with a strange environment*
  Why does it feel strange? Is it the people or the place, or both? Simon, in *The Nargun and the Stars* had reason to feel very strange about moving from the city to the country. Eleanor in *Eleanor Elizabeth* and Mark in *Family at the Lookout* also felt strange. Marty in *Marty Moves to the Country* was not happy about the change, nor was *The Boy who Painted the Sun* when he moved to the city, but Frances and Graham moved to the country quite happily in *First There Was Frances.* Who has to change? Can people change? What happened in the book you read?
- *Leaving old friends and making new ones*
- *Being accepted by the other children in the new place*
  These two points go together. They are probably the hardest to deal with. Eleanor found it harder to fit in at the new school than her brothers did. Why was that? Trevor, in *Cannily Cannily* had an even harder time. What were the problems of fitting in for the children in *The Seventh Pebble* and in *Five Times Dizzy*? Were there any other ways of dealing with this kind of loneliness? How do you feel about 'new kids' at your school or in your neighbourhood? Talk about this in your groups.
- *Coping with different teachers and school work*
  How did your book's characters cope? Do you think that s/he could have tried harder or that the teacher could have been more helpful? Have you ever had to change schools? How did you feel about it?
- *Finding new ways and places to play*
  Is it any easier moving from city to country because country children have more space? City children usually have less play space but manage to find interesting things to do e.g. *Junk Castle* shows that cubby houses can be built anywhere – well, almost! In *Old Sam, Jasper and Mr Frank,* mutual interest in Mr Frank proved absorbing for city dwellers, Old Sam and Jasper. How did your books' characters cope?

Novels

Fowler, Thurley. *Am I Going With You?,* Ashton.
French, Simon. *Cannily Cannily,* Angus & Robertson.
Gleeson, Libby. *Eleanor Elizabeth,* Penguin.
Klein, Robin. *Junk Castle,* Oxford University Press.
Mattingley, Christobel. *Tiger's Milk,* Angus & Robertson.
Shelley, Noreen. *Family at the Lookout,* Oxford University Press.
Spence, Eleanor. *The Seventh Pebble,* Oxford University Press.
Spence, Eleanor. *The October Child,* Oxford University Press.
Todd, Trever. *Old Sam, Jasper and Mr Frank,* Penguin.
Wheatley, Nadia. *Five Times Dizzy,* Oxford University Press.
Wrightson, Patricia. *The Nargun and the Stars,* Hutchinson.
Wrightson, Patricia. *A Little Fear,* Hutchinson.

Picture books

Graham, Bob. *First There Was Frances,* Lothian.
Morris, Jill; Geoff Hocking (illus.). *The Boy Who Painted the Sun,* Kestrel.
Walker, Kate; Bruce Treloar (illus.). *Marty Moves to the Country,* Methuen.

Topic B: Having a place in a family

Feeling that you belong also involves knowing where you fit in the family. The fit is not always comfortable and children wish their brothers and sisters and their parents would act differently towards them. In this group of books, it seems clear that whether they live in the country or the city, children need to learn to live with other people – starting with their own families. Think about these points in relation to the books listed below.

- *Knowing where you fit*
  Where do you fit in your family? Are you the eldest, in the middle, the youngest? What difference does it make? Why? Which character in the book family did you feel closest to? Why? Would you like to have any of the characters as brothers/sisters? Which ones? Why? Jennifer, country born, in *The Green Wind,* Eleanor from the town, in *Eleanor Elizabeth,* both feel that they are the odd ones out in their families. Find the parts of their stories that show this. Have you ever felt this way? Write a short diary entry about it.

- *Needing space*
  Do you ever bicker with your brothers/sisters as the children in the books did? Do you quarrel about the same things as they did? Do you think country children quarrel about different things from city children? In *The Green Wind* Jennifer and Margaret fight about sharing a bedroom as do Carlton and Simon in *Am I Going With You?* Jack, in *Three Way Street* defends his private territory stoutly as does Eleanor with the old school house and the cave in *Eleanor Elizabeth.* Callie is another one who needs a place of her own, in *Callie's Castle.* All these children, whether they live in city or country, have this same need. How do you feel about having a place all to yourself, however small it may be? Describe or draw the kind of place you would like. Having a place to call home at all can also be a problem. In *The Left-Overs,* the four children, though unrelated, felt like a family. They wanted to stay together and with Aunty Bill so much that they made great efforts to do so. The threatened demolition of their old house was a factor. What is a home? What is a family? Read to find the significance of the title of the book.

- *Caring for family members*
  Even though children quarrel and get really angry with siblings they can also feel responsible for one another, especially for younger ones as Jennifer did for Alexander in *The Green Wind* or as Eleanor did for Billy in *Eleanor Elizabeth* and Carlton did for Simon in *Am I Going With You?* Do you have to be responsible for anyone else? How do you feel about it?

- *Chores and pets*
  Sharing responsibility for chores is also part of belonging in a family. Country children often have quite a lot of chores to do, e.g. taking lunch to men at harvest time. Does this make them more responsible than city children? Or are the

responsibilities just different? In *The Green Wind,* the children are responsible for many chores including care of animals who often seem more like pets, especially to Alexander. This makes it hard when, for example, two of his pet roosters, Myron and Bert, have to be killed for dinner. Pets for city children are still a responsibility but in a different way. Read *Three Way Street* to find out about the difficulties which Aggie has in keeping her skinny dog Bruce in a congested inner city area or all the problems Sebastian caused in *The Latch Key Dog,* and how Mareka managed to pasture her Yaya's goat in Newtown in *Five Times Dizzy.* What are your responsibilities to your pets? Or do you have imaginary ones like *Thing* or *The Giraffe in Pepperrell Street?*

Poems

Fatchen, Max. 'Country Lunch' in *Wry Rhymes for Troublesome Times,* Viking Kestrel.

Fatcher, Max. 'The Country Dog' in *Songs for My Dog and Other People,* Kestrel.

Novels

Fowler, Thurley. *The Green Wind,* Rigby.
Fowler, Thurley. *Am I Going With You?* Ashton.
Gleeson, Libby. *Eleanor Elizabeth,* Penguin.
Klein, Robin. *Junk Castle,* Oxford University Press.
Mattingley, Christobel. *Duck Boy,* Angus & Robertson.
Nicholls, Bron. *Three Way Street,* Hutchinson.
Park, Ruth. *Callie's Castle,* Angus & Robertson.
Spence, Eleanor. *The Left-Overs,* Methuen.
Thiele, Colin. *Shadow on the Hills,* Rigby.
Thiele, Colin. *The Valley Between,* Rigby.
Todd, Trevor. *Old Sam, Jasper and Mr Frank,* Penguin.
Wheatley, Nadia. *Five Times Dizzy,* Oxford University Press.

Picture Books

Bolton, Barbara. *Jandy Malone and the Nine O'Clock Tiger,* Angus & Robertson.
Graham, Bob. *The Wild,* Collins.
Graham, Bob. *Pete and Roland,* Collins.
Hole, Quentin. *How To Demolish a Monster,* Collins.
Klein, Robin. *The Giraffe in Pepperell Street,* Hodder & Stoughton.
Klein, Robin. *Thing,* Oxford University Press.
Moffatt, Frank. *Farmer Beans and the Pantry Frog,* Nelson.
Pender, Lydia. *The Useless Donkeys,* Methuen.
Thiele, Colin. *River Murray Mary,* Rigby.
Dalgleish, Joan. *The Latch Key Dog,* Hodder & Stoughton.

Theme: The need for self-esteem

Whether children live in the city or the country, they need to develop a sense of personal worth through having friends, and having interests which are important to them.

Topic C: Having friends

- *'To have a friend, you need to be a friend'*
  Jennifer in *The Green Wind* eventually found out that her sharp tongue and clever remarks could cause trouble. She did try hard to make a friend of Beverley Martin who had come from the city and had never been on a farm before. Did the visit work as Jennifer planned? Read Chapter 5. Was it anybody's fault that things did not go according to plan? In the end, her special friend came from another quarter and for quite different reasons. What were they? Who was it?

- *Protecting friends*
  In *I Own the Racecourse,* city boy Andy Hoddel had plenty of friends but because he was different, he had trouble understanding the monopoly type game they played. They were horrified when he 'bought' the racecourse.They nearly came to blows in trying to decide whether Andy should be forced to face reality or allowed to live in the fantasy world in which he was so happy. Who was right? Joe Mooney or Mike O'Day? All Andy's friends wanted to help but *how* was the problem. There are a lot of ideas about friendship in this story. Read up to the end of Chapter 10, then write how the story might end before reading on to find out what *did* happen.

- *Old people can be friends*
  Did you know that many children have old people as friends? Old Sam Lindsay was not at all pleased when an Aboriginal family moved in next door to his old 'weatherboard weather-beaten house' in the inner city, but he and young Jasper were to become firm friends. Penny Pollard, a city girl with a passion for horses, was surprised to find a friend in old Mrs Bettany. Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper found a real friend, and her memory, with Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge. River Murray Mary, a self-reliant country girl, had a friend in old Abel Sentross the retired riverboat captain and liked him very much. Do you know any old people as friends? How did Jasper, Penny, Wilfred Gordon or Mary come to make friends with old people?

- *Feeling left out*
  Sometimes it is hard to make friends, especially when you are seen as 'different'. Trevor in *Cannily Cannily* and Antony in *Tiger's Milk,* though years apart in age, were both anxious to join in the football game but the country town boys gave them a hard time. Why was this? How did they each solve their problems? Mareka had trouble making friends in the city, in *Five Times Dizzy.* The Connells in Hollybush Flat also encountered prejudice, in *The Seventh Pebble,* in which it took Rachel Blackwell's own experience to help her understand how Bridget Connell felt. Have you ever felt like an outsider? How did it feel? Have you ever known anyone who was treated like one? Write a diary entry as to how they might feel.

Novels

French, Simon. *Cannily Cannily,* Angus & Robertson.
Fowler, Thurley. *The Green Wind,* Rigby.
Mattingley, Christobel. *Tiger's Milk,* Angus & Robertson.
Spence, Eleanor. *The Seventh Pebble,* Oxford University Press.
Todd, Trevor. *Old Sam, Jasper and Mr Frank,* Penguin.
Wheatley, Nadia. *Five Times Dizzy,* Oxford University Press.
Wrightson, Patricia. *I Own the Racecourse,* Hutchinson.

Picture Books

Fox, Mem; Julie Vivas (illus.). *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge,* Omnibus.
Klein, Robin; Ann James (illus.). *Penny Pollard's Diary,* Oxford University Press.
Thiele, Colin; Robert Ingpen (illus.). *River Murray Mary,* Rigby.

Conclusion

Australia is a country with a large land mass over which a small population is unevenly distributed. This can give rise to misunderstandings between groups widely separated by distance, lifestyle and environmental conditions. It is through social science programs that teachers usually attempt to increase children's awareness and understanding of the differences and similarities that exist and the reasons for these. The literature-based approach I have outlined above can complement and enrich such programs or alternatively provide a starting point for a unit of work on personal and social needs or on rural and urban Australia.

References

Bassett, G.W. et al. (1974) *Primary Education in Australia,* Angus & Robertson.
Parker, E.A. (1969) *Teaching the Reading of Fiction.* Teachers College Press.

Outside — Inside Playground Rhymes

Moira Robinson

In the playground

North, south, west and east in Australia, children share a common literature: of brilliant witticisms, catch cries, fractured nursery rhymes and chants. The rhymes exist partly to give form to rituals like 'counting out', partly as a type of mouth music to accompany skipping or ball bouncing, partly and most importantly to redress the balance of power between children and adults with irreverent rhymes like,

> Oh dear! What can the matter be?
> Three old ladies got locked
> in the lavatory . . .

These are the rhymes with which kids assert their growing independence, so that nursery rhymes they enjoyed while cuddled down on a parent's lap a few years earlier, are now deliberately tossed back in somewhat altered form:

> Along came a spider
> Who sat down beside her
> And Little Miss Muffet said
> 'Buzz off, hairy legs!'

Girls and boys share much the same repertoire, and though June Factor remarks that some non-English rhymes have been collected, 'it would appear that in the school environment English is the lingua franca of Australian children at play, even those whose mother language is not English. Clearly, verbal play remains a primary means of language learning and social interaction for all children!'[1]

In the classroom

Adults are the interlopers in this world, but if we are properly aware of the fact, it can be a positive advantage. Most literature that children encounter in school is written by adults, published by adults, and handed out by adults for children to read. Here, by contrast, we have a literature that originates with the children, which is already partly familiar and non-threatening; a literature that is inseparably linked to play with all its concomitant delights. To see these rhymes in print in June Factor's three invaluable books, *Far Out Brussel Sprout!*, *All Right Vegemite!*, and *Unreal Banana Peel!* [2] has given children a real boost to their collective ego. Even a reluctant reader has an uneasy feeling that print is important and now, astonishingly, there

are rhymes in print that she/he knows. Connections between speech and print suddenly become plainer when the words are as familiar as:

A peanut sat on a railway track
Its heart was all a-flutter . . .

rather than some alien story full of incomprehensible commands to 'Look there' and 'Come here'; in fact June Factor says of *Far Out, Brussel Sprout!*, 'It is almost impossible for a child not to be able to read this book'.

Nor should we underestimate the rhymes themselves. They have existed from generation to generation because their content is pithy and humorous, because their rhythm is infectious and their language vigorous. They are the stuff of which poetry is made, and in a proper environment with teacher-pupil roles reversed, children can be encouraged to explore language, rhythm and poetry further without losing the fun element that underlies all playground rhymes.

Teaching ideas for grades 2/3

Reinforce the familiarity of the rhymes

Introduce June Factor's three books to the children and make them part of the class library. Read some of your particular favourites that you remember from childhood. It comes as a real shock to kids to discover that Sir or Miss actually knows 'Ooey gooey was a worm' and even more of a shock to realise that their teacher was once a child in a child's world. Playground rhymes are one of the relatively few meeting places of the generations, as June Factor remarks: 'Adults and children laugh and remember together and in a culture with forbidding demarcation lines between what is suitable for the young and suitable for those no longer young, that is no small achievement.' [3]

Suggest that the kids find and share some of their favourite rhymes with the rest of the grade. Have a Rhyme-a-Day chosen and copied onto the board by a different child every few days.

Move naturally from speech to print

When you have a few minutes to spare, try some chants. A rhyme my own kids loved, I think because of its impressively long words, was:

Dictation, dictation, dictation,
Three sausages went to the station . . . *(All Right Vegemite!,* p.10*)*

Say it together, roll the words round on the tongue, see who can find it in the book. Try more chants, write up the words; chant them in canon; find others to enjoy together. Outside have an impromptu skipping session. Chant the rhymes you remember. If any are forthcoming from the children, join in. Back in the classroom, see which of the rhymes appear in June Factor's books. Suggest the children ask their parents for the rhymes they remember from their childhood, write them down and try them out. Skip or bounce balls to poems that children probably don't know. Colin Thiele's poem,

When I went to Byaduk, to Byaduk, to Byaduk,
When I went to Byaduk, my grandma said to me . . . [4]

for instance, makes a wonderful skipping rhyme, as an energetic group of teachers demonstrated at a recent in-service. When the words are familiar, write them down

so that kids can read the poem for their own enjoyment.

Don't force children to divulge their rhymes when they don't want to do so. That's why contributions from you are important; it should be a genuine sharing and not an anthropologist's field day. Equally don't make the rhymes into writing exercises; all one wants to do is to let children discover for themselves the link between the spoken and written word.

Springboard to language

Have young children (Prep and grade 1) mime chants so that the meaning is reinforced — such chants as:

> Have you ever, ever, ever
> In your long-legged life
> Seen a long-legged sailor
> With a long-legged wife? (*Unreal Banana Peel!*, p. 76)

Think of other descriptions like 'pigeon-toed' or 'roly-poly' and make up more verses to chant and mime. Many of the rhymes are easy to use as models because they are essentially simple and rhythmically accommodating. It is easy, for instance, to make up other verses for,

> Order in the court
> The judge is eating beans
> His wife is in the bath-tub
> Shooting submarines. (*Unreal Banana Peel*, p. 79)
>
> or
>
> When you say one, you touch your tongue.
> When you say two, you touch your shoe. *(Unreal Banana Peel* p. 92*)*

Read together some of the many versions of 'Mary had a little lamb' (see *Far Out, Brussel Sprout!*, pp. 42-43). Do we know any other versions? Can we make up some more? Find other nursery rhymes to fracture, and, as an accompaniment, read those fractured nursery tales, *Revolting Rhymes* by Roald Dahl. [5]

The sound of the rhymes is a large part of their attraction. Read and relish the nonsense sounds of something like,

> Ellery bellery ripperty rah
> Ripperty rah terollar
> Every man who has no beard
> Ought to wear a collar. (*All Right Vegemite!*, p. 72)

and follow it up with the tumbling sounds of David McCord's poem 'The Pickety Fence'. [6]

Read 'Nobody likes me' (*Far Out Brussel Sprout!*, p. 8) with its wonderful wormy words, then try Pauline Clarke's poem, 'My name is Sluggery-Wuggery' [7] and build together more names like 'Swallow the Table-leg!'.

Children become fascinated by tongue-twisters or nonsense words as their own mastery of language develops. Roll tongue-twisters like 'A tutor who tooted the flute' (*All Right Vegemite!*, p. 55) round the mounth. Collect other tongue-twisters and see how fast you can say them. Try making them up and put together a book of mouth-contorters. Try writing one-letter stories – there is an excellent one done by a grade 5 boy in *See the Sea* [8] – and read the tongue twisting poems like 'On the Ning Nang

Nong' by Spike Milligan. [9]

Rhyme seems the height of cleverness for many kids because it implies a mastery over language. That's why catch-phrases like 'See you later, alligator' are so immensely satisfying. Cover a large graffiti sheet with examples from the books or from the kids. See if you can devise more over the next few weeks. Make up more verses to strongly-rhymed stories or poems like *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes* [10] and read poems where the author has positively enjoyed the device of rhyme, for example 'The Adventures of Isabel' by Ogden Nash [11] where he manages to rhyme 'rancour' with 'drank her'.

Many of the jokes and cryptic messages such as '2Y'sUR' (*Far Out Brussel Sprout!* p. 102) depend again on a confidence with language; they signify a linguistic coming-of-age. With grade 3 the swapping of similar jokes can lead to a collection of 'Knock-knock' jokes with their attendant puns, to simple riddles like 'When is a tap not a tap?' and so to the writing of puzzle poems when children think of an object and describe what it looks, smells, feels, sounds and tastes like in as few words as possible.

Springboard to rhythm

Playground pastimes like skipping or clapping games depend on strong rhythms, for it is rhythm that provides the structure for the game. Have children clap and slap accompaniments to jingles like 'I had a baby brother, his name was Tiny Tim' (*Far Out Brussel Sprout,* p. 78) and then to other less familiar poems with an equally infectious rhythm, like Hugh McCrae's

> Six white cats in an old tin tub
> Muvver has gone to the Pub Pub Pub! [12]

One of the points that June Factor stresses is the 'cooperative collaborative nature of much of children's traditional play, the non-individual activities which are a feature of their own subculture.' [13] It is the collaborative nature of chants which partly makes them such a vital part of the language program. In

> Hello, sir, hello sir,
> Meet you at the show, sir,
> No, sir, Why sir?
> Because I've got a cold, Sir. *(Far Out Brussel Sprout!,* p. 97*)*

children can share question and response, while under-scoring the rhythm with claps. Something like 'Guess what I found? Guess what I found?' (*Unreal Banana Peel!,* p. 40) with its antiphonal effects can lead to fun with some of Carolyn Graham's *Jazz Chants for Children* [14] a wonderful series of chants, all based on the idea of reciprocity:

> Teacher: Sh! Sh! Stop that noise!
> Children: Sh! Sh! Stop that noise!
> Sh! Sh! Stop that noise!

Carolyn Graham's chants are designed as models on which children and teachers can build similar chants, using 'the natural rhythm, stress and intonation patterns of conversational English', chants which 'bear a close relationship to children's games and to the child's natural affinity for rhythm and movement.' [15]

Conclusion

Some of children's reading problems and their uncertainty with language come from a sense of alienation from the type of language they see in print, the language they hear spoken by teachers, from the 'competitive and individualist assumptions which underlie much classroom practice'. [16] Children's rhymes give us an excellent opportunity to start where the children are, with language that is theirs, with material shaped by them to their needs and tastes in the late 1980s, needs and tastes that differ remarkably little from our own, twenty, thirty or forty years ago.

Footnotes

1 Factor, June, (comp.). *Unreal Banana Peel!* Oxford University Press.

2 Factor, June, (comp.). *Far Out Brussell Sprout!* Oxford University Press.
Factor, June, (comp.). *All Right Vegemite!* Oxford University Press.
Factor, June, (comp.). *Unreal Banana Peel!* Oxford University Press.

3 Factor, June, (comp.). *Unreal Banana Peel!* op.cit.

4 Factor, June, (comp.). *A First Australian Poetry Book,* Oxford University Press.

5 Dahl, Roald. *Revolting Rhymes,* Jonathon Cape.

6 McCord, David. 'The Pickety Fence' in Butler, Dorothy, (Comp.). *'For Me, Me, Me,'* Hodder & Stoughton.

7 Clarke, Pauline. 'My name is Sluggery-Wuggery' in Factor, June. (comp.). *A First Australian Poetry Book,* op.cit.

8 Ferguson, Virginia. *See the Sea,* McGraw Hill Book Co.

9 Milligan, Spike. *Silly Verse for Kids,* Penguin.

10 Sutton, Eve. *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes,* Hamish Hamilton. Picture Puffin.

11 Nash, Ogden. 'The Adventures of Isabel' in Prelutsky, Jack (ed.) *The Walker Book of Poetry for Children,* Walker Books.

12 McCrae, Hugh. 'Six White Cats', in Heylen, Jill; Jellett, Celia (eds.). *Someone is Flying Balloons,* Omnibus Books.

13 Factor, June, (comp.). *Unreal Banana Peel!* op.cit.

14 Graham, Carolyn. *Jazz Chants for Children,* Oxford University Press.

15 Graham, Carolyn. *Jazz Chants for Children, Teacher's Edition,* Oxford University Press.

16 Factor, June, (comp.). *Unreal Banana Peel!* op.cit.

Note: Teachers interested in researching this topic further could make excellent use of *'Cinderella Dressed in Yella'* by Wendy Lowenstein, June Factor and Ian Turner, (Heinemann 2nd ed. 1982) which is a study of the traditional chants, rhymes and folklore of children in Australia.

Great Races and Challenges

Susan Hill, Meredith Kennedy,
Judy O'Brien, Rosemary Hann

Australians love races. The whole country stands still to watch a marathon run by an elderly potato farmer who trains in gumboots, or horses in peak performance racing in the Melbourne Cup. It is not so much the winning of the race that involves us but the shared excitement as the participants race against each other or compete with themselves to achieve a personal best.

Two teachers, who team-teach a year 5-7 class and the teacher-librarian, drew on the excitement generated by great races and challenges and developed a literature-based reading program with books about great races written by Australian authors. The children in the class read and responded to books individually and in groups and shared a focus book as a whole class.

The focus book

As a focus book to be read aloud each morning, the teachers selected *The Valley Between* by Colin Thiele, as it covered many themes the children had been discussing in social studies: becoming an Australian, the growth of a technological society, rural and city living and growing up earlier this century. The book begins with a great race between Jack and Adolf, one driving a horse and cart and the other a motor car. After reading Chapter 2, where the great race is introduced, the children hypothesised about:

- Who will win the race and why?
- What is the race about?
  - new immigrants and old Australians
  - new technology versus old ways
- What elements occur in any race?
  - spectators
  - dirty tricks or strategies
  - rules for competitors
  - rewards for winning or participating in the race
- Why do people participate in races?
  - fun
  - fitness/to lose weight
  - to improve skills and abilities
  - to meet people

The children's predictions about the race were listed on charts and the story was then continued so the children could find out if their hypotheses were correct.

As the children became more involved with the issues in *The Valley Between* they wanted to find out more about the author Colin Thiele and invited him to visit the school. They prepared questions to ask him about writing *The Valley Between* and how he came to write books for children. The visit by the author stimulated great interest in other books written by Colin Thiele and provided impetus and encouragement for the children's own writing.

Individual and group reading

While the children listened to and discussed the focus book each day, they also read other Australian books based on great races (see bibliography). The teacher-librarian introduced fifteen fiction and a range of non-fiction books to the children. She highlighted key themes in each book by referring to a chart describing elements occurring in great races.

The teacher-librarian also provided the teachers with a very brief plot summary and open-ended questions for each book to make discussion about the books easier for the teachers who did not have time to read each book, e.g.

The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race

Plot Grandfather Theodore prepares Grandson Edward for the race which takes place in a river, overlooked by numerous animal spectators.

Discussion
1. Did Edward intend to win the race at all costs?
2. How was Edward prepared for the race?
3. What were some of the specific rules for the race?
4. Why do you think hippos are the main characters?

The teachers had a simple book borrowing scheme where the library cards for each book were placed in pockets on a wall chart so that it was clear to all which books were out and who had read the particular books. A large range of books was provided for children to read individually; from easy picture books to novels, from non-fiction information books to biographies.

To organise the program so that choices were provided for the children, a simple contract was introduced. This contract ensured that the children were reading a range of genres and involved in individual and cooperative activities as they responded to the books read.

The Great Race Contract

Read at least 3 stories or books
* Include at least one non-fiction

Read one book or story and complete an activity based on that book, then move on to the next book.

In the time allocated everyone must do

* 1 individual activity with written content
* 1 individual activity with creative content
* 1 further activity – choice of individual or group
* 1 group challenge/race. Include – reason for
  – preparation
  – action
  – outcomes

The program continued over 4-5 weeks and the children had time to read books of their choice and to recommend good books to read to other children. A host of different responses to the books were suggested on activity cards stored in a container in the classroom. These cards could be used with any of the great race books. Some of the children's favourite activities were:

Make Up a Play

Try writing a short play to be acted out by several class members at a later date. Your play should not be too long and should revolve around a 'great race'.

You will have to describe the setting of the play and think about the behaviour and personalities of your characters.

It may help if you have certain children in mind before you start writing, as this may help you with the production of your play.

Make a Game.

Make up a game, or a board game, that other children can share, based on an event in the book you have just read.

The game will need to be carefully thought out so that a small group of children can easily follow the rules and enjoy themselves.

'Dirty Tricks.'

Look at two or more races you have read about and compare the 'dirty tricks' used in each race.

Explain the outcome of these dirty tricks, and the reasons why the characters used them.

A Story about a Great Race

This story can be about a race that has actually happened; or about a race that could happen.

You may like to publish your story in book form (maybe using pictures to complement your story).

Maybe you would like to write a story suitable for younger readers. (a 'big book' is always popular with junior primary children).

Make Up Your Own Challenge or Race

When you have decided what the event is to be, you must plan it very carefully.

Some things to think about are:-

- *conditions of entry*
- *rules*
- *advertising your event*
- *judging the event*

The planning and staging of the event must be written down.

A short opinion of how successful the race/challenge was must be given (in writing) after the race/challenge has been run.

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Make a poster to advertise the event in the story you have just read.

Don't forget to mention in your poster all the important points that the reader should know about.

Cartoons

Make a series of cartoon strips.

This could be published in serial form in the school newsletters.

The cartoons must be carefully sequenced so that it is easy to follow the story you wish to tell.

The pictures must be very clear and must be black and white if you wish to publish them in a newsletter.

Letter to the Author

A letter may be written to the author of the book, making comments about what you enjoyed and why.

Paint a Mural

With a group of children, paint a mural of the great event in the story you have read.

A mural normally shows a sequence of happenings as they occur.

Each group member can paint one of these and then everyone puts their paintings together to show the whole event.

Letters to Characters

Write a letter to a character in the book that you have just read.

You can imagine that you are a friend of the character and have questions that you want to find out about from your friend.

or

You can imagine that you have somehow managed to get the character's address and have some comments and questions that you wish to put into a letter.

As the children read books and engaged in the various response activities, they recorded the books they read and activities completed on a chart so that the range of books and activities read could be easily monitored by the teachers. The teachers, teacher-librarian and interested parents discussed the books and activities informally with the children. These discussions were informal book conferences and it was evident that the children were also sharing their ideas about the books with each other as they engaged in reading and responding in various ways in the hallways, on the floor and spread across desks.

A highlight of the program was the concluding race day where groups of children invented races and challenges for their classmates. They organised the venue, the number of participants, the rules and arranged prizes. There were chocolate eating races, a maze race using classroom tables and chairs, eating, drinking and dressing races, billycart races on the oval, and a race between pet mice. There were also traditional races with bikes, three-legged races and relay races. The drink-n-eat race was the final activity where participants had to eat a donut tied to a string, without using their hands, run to a table, make and drink a glass of Salvital, and bob for an apple in a trough of water. The winners definitely won the prize of severe indigestion amid much laughter.

The literature-based program on great races or challenges could easily be modified for any age level. For younger children the focus book could be fiction or picture books and the activity cards modified to suit the children's reading levels. In the year 5-7 classes, there was a range of reading ability and particular preferences for books to read. We've recorded some concerns or problems and their resolutions for other teachers who may want to implement a similar program.

Problem:	What do you do if children are all at different reading levels?
Resolution:	Provide books at all levels and allow children to select books they want to read.
Problem:	Not all children like to write about books.
Resolution:	Provide a variety of activities so children can select activities which enhance their strengths or areas they wish to work on.
Problem:	Some children don't read non-fiction.
Resolution:	Provide a non-negotiable activity which asks children to read some non-fiction of their choice.
Problem:	The whole notion of racing is very competitive. How can we encourage more cooperative group challenges?
Resolution:	Provide cooperative activities for children to work on collaboratively.
Problem:	A teacher cannot read all the books the children read individually.
Resolution:	Invite teacher-librarians and parents into the program and have everyone read a few books. Use plot synopses and open-ended discussion questions.
Problem:	Some children only want to draw as a response.
Resolution:	Provide some negotiation in the program but have some non-negotiable activities that stimulate responses through writing.

Problem: What if you can't find enough books based on the idea of races and challenges?

Resolution: We borrowed books from other schools and had bulk loans from nearby libraries.

A Bibliography of Selected Books

E easy
M middle primary
U upper primary

Cox, David. *Tin Lizzie and Little Nell,* (E) Fontana, Collins.

Dann, Max. *Bernice Knows Best,* (M) Oxford University Press.

Dugan, Michael. *The Great Overland Riverboat Race,* (M) Puffin.

Dugan, Michael. *Race for Treasure,* (M), Nelson.

Edwards, Hazel. *The Billy-Cart Battle,* (M) Rigby.

Giles, Barbara. *Bicycles Don't Fly,* (M) Puffin.

Green, Cliff. *Riverboat Bill Steams Again,* (U) Hodder & Stoughton.

Green, Cliff. *The Further Adventures of Riverboat Bill,* (U) Hodder & Stoughton.

Green, Cliff. *The Incredible Adventures of Riverboat Bill,* (U) Hodder & Stoughton.

Greenwood, Ted. *Terry's Brrrmmm,* (E) Angus & Robertson.

Lurie, Morris. *The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race,* (M) Puffin.

Page, Michael and Ingpen, Robert. *The Great Bullocky Race,* (M/U) Hill of Content.

Thiele, Colin. *The Valley Between,* (U) Rigby, Opal Books.

Todd, Trevor. *The Racing Car Driver's Moustache,* (E) Hodder & Stoughton.

Wilton, Elizabeth. *Riverboat Family,* (U) Angus & Robertson.

Australia — Where are we going?

Marie Luxford
Maureen Ferry

The Technological Age — where is it leading us?

Australian authors who have developed the science in fiction genre have, in the main, concentrated on two themes:

1. War — civil
   — international
2. Technology — the stresses which present day society and technology bring to bear on individuals and the environment.

Science and technology have brought about major changes in Australia, including the fear of nuclear war and unemployment created by technological development with its resultant human tragedy.

The focal questions:

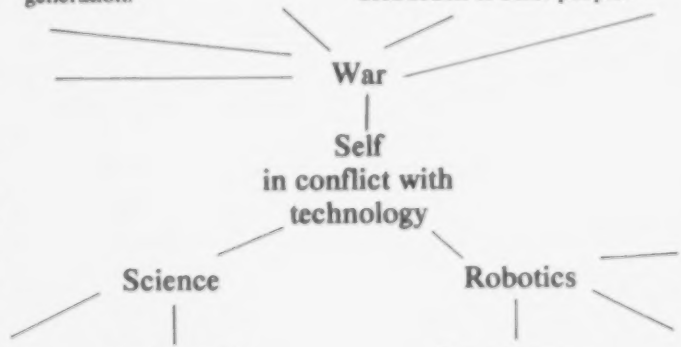
- Is our common humanity more important than the forces which separate us?
- Are nationalism, patriotism, love of one's own country and hostility to outside groups consistent with being a contributor to a global society?
- Can we, as Australians, afford to adopt an isolationist attitude in the light of such disasters as the nuclear reactor breakdown at Chernobyl, the leakage of mercury into the sea from a factory at Minimata and the methyl isocyanate which escaped into the air at Bhopal?

The resulting discussions should lead to consideration of:

- respect for others
- whether the end justifies the means when it involves massive or minor destruction of life and environment
- whether one should obey orders which conflict with one's conscience.

Figure 1 outlines the novels and issues which are referred to in this article and which could be integrated into a study of the technological age for students in years 6-7.

Figure 1.



Taronga

Civil Warfare

What are the implications in living near an unscrupulous and violent community?

The House that was Eureka

Civil Warfare
Anti Govt. Demonstrations

Does a show of weapons increase the likelihood of violence, breaching trust between neighbouring groups?

Papio

Medical Technology
Animal Experimentation

How justifiable is animal experimentation in the search for medical benefits?

Little Brother

Jungle/Civil Warfare

Consider the use of chemicals which destroy man and the environment, preventing regeneration.

My Sister Sif.

Industrial Technology
Submarine Oil Exploration

How can we prevent man's greed destroying the environment?

The Angel with a Mouth Organ

Conventional Warfare

How far does love of one's country justify the massive destruction of other people?

Space Demons

Computer Technology

What effect does a depersonalised technology have on our relationships with each other?

The Miracle Tree

Nuclear Warfare

Discuss the morality of developing technology which threatens the extinction of life on a global basis.

Ernest Pickle's Remarkable Robot

Computer Technology
Robotics

In what ways does the science of robotics add to the quality of life?

Halfway Across the Galaxy and Turn Left

Technology for Fun

How can we use technology to enrich our lives and our environment?

Little Brother

Baillie, Allan. Nelson.

Set in Kampuchea, in the bitter struggle for survival by the Khmers, *Little Brother* tells of a young boy's fight for survival as he crosses his embattled country, searching for his brother Mang or any other members of his family. Through jungles and across mountains and ruined cities he passes, sensing the enemy about him and seeing the horrifying impact of war on environment and people alike.

Discuss: The use of technology in jungle warfare. Consider the use of chemicals such as napalm and defoliants, and their effect on people and their environment and the morality of rendering the land of an agrarian society in South East Asia sterile. How far should Australia go in giving aid to those affected?

Vithy hides under a pile of sacks on a truck. In what other ways might the same truck be used beneficially transport of wounded and refugees, water and building materials, distributing food?

Do: Vithy constructs a bicycle adapting seemingly useless pieces of machinery to his needs. Encourage children to construct a useful article from junk.

Construct a 3D model convoy, bringing everything needed to re-establish a village: post hole diggers, tractors, bobcats – using natural materials where possible.

The Angel with a Mouth Organ

Mattingley, Christobel. Hodder & Stoughton.

A family of European refugees are forced to flee from their home and make their way on foot across Europe during World War II. Food, clothing and shelter is scarce, the disabled father is taken by the army and other family members die. Despite great privation the mother and two little sisters maintain their indominatable spirit and the belief that the family will be reunited.

Discuss: Compare the family situations in *The Angel with the Mouth Organ* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

During World War II the English Air Force bombed the beautiful and historical city of Dresden although it was not a military objective. The bombing was a deliberate attempt to demoralise the civilian population of Germany. The Germans retaliated by bombing the Cathedral City of Exeter. What are the implications of the killing of innocent people? What was achieved by either side?

Do: Debate the following statement: In modern warfare all citizens, both combatants and non-combatants are involved in their country's war effort and can therefore be considered as legitimate targets of enemy action. How far do you agree with this? Discuss in relation to Northern Ireland, Vietnam and Lebanon.

Role play the part of Winston Churchill (who masterminded the bombing of Dresden) attempting to justify this action.

List all the items you would need to take with you if you were to be evacuated from your home. Explain the reasons for your choices.

The Miracle Tree

Mattingley, Christobel. Hodder & Stoughton.

Taro was a gardener in Nagasaki who left his beautiful young bride to go to war. When he returned from the army hoping to live in peace with her, he found only destruction and death. He searched for his wife for many years, but no-one knew her. One Christmas Day, Taro planted a tiny pine tree which became a symbol of hope to two women, an old woman searching for her estranged daughter, and a younger woman hideously disfigured by the atom bomb blast. Each of the three hoped for a miracle as they watched the little tree grow.

Discuss: The morality of developing technology which threatens the extinction of life on a global basis.

Although the Americans have been involved in wars in Korea and Vietnam since World War II, they have never dropped another nuclear bomb. Why do you think they haven't?

What effect might the French testing of nuclear weapons on Muroroa Atoll have on Australia?

How can we prevent the release of more radioactive matter in our hemisphere?

Do: Visit the State Schools Nursery (Victoria) or other large nursery to find out how a Japanese garden is planted. Design a miniature garden or terrarium for the classroom.

Make origami people to represent the characters in *The Miracle Tree.*

Ernest Pickle's Remarkable Robot

Dann, Max. Oxford University Press.

To counteract his unpopularity at school, Ernest builds a remarkable robot which he calls Glen. Glen is programmed with a high-frequency, pre-recorded, continuous tape which can penetrate the subconscious minds of Ernest's enemies and transmit the message that Ernest is wonderful. Unfortunately, Glen's transmission also effects the Rockabilly Defence Space Program and special agents are sent to locate and destroy Glen. After a frightening encounter with the agents and his horrible new 'friends', Ernest realises that popularity should not be equated with real friendship.

Discuss: In what ways does the science of robotics add to the quality of life?

If you had the means and the ability to create a robot like Glen, what qualities would you give it and how would you feel towards it?

Do: Using boxes, cans, wires, batteries, bulbs, and foil, construct a robot.

Dramatise Ernest's encounter with the two special agents.

Halfway Across the Galaxy and Turn Left

Klein, Robin. Viking/Kestrel, Puffin.

X and her family were forced to leave their home planet, Zyrgon, after Father got

into trouble with the authorities. He had invented a devious method of winning the government lottery, which may have gone unnoticed had he not won it twenty-seven times in succession.

After landing on alien Earth, X, as Family Organizer, is kept busy preventing their betrayal to the local authorities by the weird activities of her crazy family.

Discuss: How can we use technology to enrich our lives and our environment?

If you were a visitor to Earth from Planet Z and wished to remain unnoticed, how would you disguise the fact that you had only one leg to move about on?

If the circuitry of your house cleaning robot malfunctioned, and instead of vacuuming the carpets, it sucked up the budgerigar, and proceeded to clone budgerigars, what would you do with 1046 budgies in the light of Kit Wright's threat in 'The Budgies' New Year Message'?

Do: Visit a planetarium to look at a map of the sky and discuss the probability of intelligent life existing close enough for us to reach it or it to reach us.

My Sister Sif.

Park, Ruth. Viking/Kestrel.

Rongo is an island Paradise to Riko and her sister Sif. Returning there from a mundane life in Sydney they become starkly aware of the destruction of submarine life owing to man's disregard for the balance of nature in drilling for oil in the nearby reefs. The tender Sif spans the gulf between the two worlds and spends her life in her efforts to support both.

Discuss: The Greenpeace organisation and its activities around the world. Pinpoint on a world map those areas to which its activities are directed and identify the reasons for its involvement.

Does such an organisation have the right to invade territorial waters to prevent violence to nature? Discuss with reference to the clubbing of baby seals in the Arctic circle, to the slaughter of dolphins and whales, to atomic testing on Muroroa atoll.

Consider the violence aroused between groups in society caused by differing attitudes towards sensitive issues such as damming the Franklin River in Tasmania, drilling for oil in the Great Barrier Reef or logging the rainforests of the Daintree.

Are there any threats to the environment in your area? What can be done to prevent destruction of the environment?

Do: Shell collecting — arrange and classify.
Search rockpools along coastlines and examine life to be found in them: camouflage, symbiotic relationships, variety of life forms, plant and animal.

Approach local conservation groups requesting information on matters of local concern with a view to supporting/opposing their endeavours, being always careful to identify reasons for so doing.

Read Geoffrey Dutton's sea poems in *On my island,* Cheshire.

Papio

Kelleher, Victor. Kestrel, Puffin.

Two adolescents, David and Jem, free a pair of baboons from an animal experimentation laboratory. The children assist the animals to re-establish themselves in a company of apes and the author uses the situation to explore the relationship between animals and humans, making the point that the most gentle and highly motivated humans have the capacity for violence when threatened, even to the point of sacrificing ideals and the things they love most.

Discuss: The ethics of using animals as subjects in medical research. Other animals are destroyed in order to satisfy man's vanity eg. leopards, seals and ocelots for fur coats, whales for perfume, polish and cosmetics. Discuss with reference to *Song of the Whale* by Kit Wright.

What value do those areas set aside as national parks and World Heritage areas hold for us and future generations? What areas have World Heritage Listing in Australia?

Do: Contact the zoo and enquire about sponsoring an animal and becoming a 'friend of the zoo'. Visit the Zoo Education Centre and request the program 'Primates, their habits and behaviour'.

The House that was Eureka

Wheatley, Nadia. Viking/Kestrel, Puffin.

During the 1920s Depression a campaign was mounted against the mass eviction of families from their rented accommodation. Scenes of violence took place in Redfern and Bankstown. The *House that was Eureka* is about a house where a real eviction battle with the police took place. It is now occupied by unemployed Evie and her family which includes her stepfather Ted who has been retrenched. The lives of Evie and Noel, the boy next door, become enmeshed with the dramatic events and with their counterparts of the past.

Discuss: The police may not have been so violent towards the picketers if Nobby had not been seen with a gun. The police had not intended using guns.

There are problems with unemployment today as there were during the Great Depression. What are the similarities of these problems? What effect does unemployment have in your local area?

Do: Explore the local area. With the help of a street directory, discover where the historical houses are. Visit the oldest houses – study their structure, building materials, how, when and for whom they were built. Might any have a resident ghost because of some past dramatic event?

Find out by various means, perhaps by visits to markets and community shops, ways in which people create opportunities for themselves to earn a small wage – or to live in communal situations whilst on the dole, each contributing in some way.

Taronga

Kelleher, Victor. Viking/Kestrel.

A 'post-holocaust' novel, *Taronga* describes Ben's survival in the dangerous country Australia has become. Using his telepathic ability to control animals he escapes from the bush only to become trapped in the savagery of the fight for life in Sydney. Entrenched within electrified barbed-wire fences at Taronga Park Zoo, an occupying group uses guns and the ferocity of the big cats to repel all attempts to break into the comparative security and food sources there. Together with Ellie, an Aboriginal girl, Ben engineers the ultimate escape of all of the animals in the hope of survival and regeneration in the freedom beyond the mountains.

Discuss: The implications of living near an unscrupulous and violent community. Could such a situation be possible as the result of some overwhelming cataclysm? Could the situations in Kampuchea, Nicaragua or the Philippines ever deteriorate to a state such as is portrayed in Taronga?
Refer to press, radio and TV reportage.

Do: With paint, collage and print make a mural/display to advertise the book.

Ben makes his painful trek from bush to Taronga Park Zoo. Make a 3D map plotting Ben's route.

Children can plan and construct a board game set in the zoo starting from 'Fence Entry' and ending up at 'Kiosk Home'. Several hazards could be negotiated such as: Menaced by snarling tiger – miss a throw; Helps injured cub – move 3 spaces; Falls in elephant enclosure moat –go back to Fence Entry.

Space Demons

Rubinstein, Gillian. Omnibus/Puffin.

Bored by everything else life has to offer, Andrew Hayford seizes on his computer game *Space Demons* and excitement grips him. Out of the computer screen comes a three-dimensional gun which is activated only by hatred. The thoughtful Ben, together with Linda and punk Mario, become involved in deadly combat with the sinister forces of the game's artificial intelligence. The young people finally come to realise that to refuse to hate is the only way to win release from their demons in the game and in everyday life.

Discuss: Does hatred cause more harm to the hated or the hater?

How can we explain the different reactions the three boys exhibit towards the appearance of the gun and the game *Space Demons?*

Do: Make a collection of characters featuring space heroes such as Blake from Blake's Seven, Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers and Mr Spock from Star Trek. Read, tell and create stories using these characters. Use the computer to help you organise your language more efficiently.

Have an Open Day for constructing Lego movable objects eg. moon buggies, jet craft.

Fly radio controlled planes with your friends.

Conclusion

The discussion topics outlined above are designed for students whose thinking is at a sophisticated level.

For younger students or those not yet at such an advanced stage of cognitive development, the discussion could focus more on what it would be like to be in the situations experienced by the characters. The children could imagine what they might do and how they might feel in such situations. They could also discuss causes of events in the book(s) and what other action should/might have been taken before and/or after each event in order to bring about different consequences. Students could also think about, investigate and discuss comparable situations in their own lives, in their community and in Australia generally, which exist now or may exist at some time in the future.

In this way literature becomes a means of exploring issues of relevance to students now and in their future lives. The literature can be the starting point or can complement investigations already under way in areas such as social science, technology, or environmental studies.

Discussions and activities related to the books read can increase awareness and lead to a greater understanding of people and the causes and consequences of certain actions. This in turn will help to give students greater control over events in their own lives.